

THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

INSIDE

N.Y. meeting: The real results of the U.S. election campaign before vote took place

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Iraq interim gov't, U.S. forces poised for assault in Fallujah Aim to put 'Sunni Triangle,' Iraq's border with Syria under control of Allawi regime

BY SAM MANUEL

The Iraqi interim government and the U.S. military are poised to launch a major ground offensive in Fallujah against militias opposed to the U.S.-backed regime in Baghdad. Their goal is to put the city, and dozens of others like Ramadi in Iraq's "Sunni Triangle," under the authority of the administration of Prime Minister Iyad Allawi prior to elections scheduled for early next year. A related goal is to take control of the border with Syria, from where a number of militiamen from abroad have been coming into Iraq.

In the first days of November, U.S. forces stepped up air strikes on militia positions in Fallujah, and in nearby Ramadi. According to the Associated Press, air and artillery bombardment was the heaviest in two months.

Meanwhile, hundreds of British troops arrived at their new base outside Baghdad

October 28, freeing up U.S. units for the offensive in the two cities. Most of London's 8,500 troops are stationed in the relatively quiet areas around Basra.

More than 3,000 U.S. Marines have now encircled Fallujah. Another 2,000 are in Ramadi.

On October 31, Allawi said the Iraqi military and U.S. forces have recently captured 167 militiamen from North Africa and Middle Eastern countries other than Iraq around Fallujah and elsewhere in the country, according to the *Knight Ridder* news agency. The interim regime used publicity around the seizures of these men to bolster its argument that "foreigners" are to a large degree responsible for many bombings and kidnappings and to push for securing Iraq's border with Syria.

Allawi also claimed that a "few thousand" followers of Izzat Ibrahim, deputy president

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Meat packers strike in Toronto, demand reversal of wage cuts

BY NATALIE STAKE-DOUCET AND JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—"We are now on strike," announced the picket captain. His declaration was followed by a rousing cheer from the roughly 35 workers milling about the front entrance to Quality Meat Packers and Toronto Abattoirs. This is a hog cut-and-kill plant in downtown Toronto. The walkout began at midnight on October 31, the expiration date of the previous six-year contract.

One of the strikers put up a sign on the fence in front of the plant that reads, "Increased cost of living + low wage increase = strike." The more than 500 workers in the plant are members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 175.

"Six years ago, I was making \$18.05 per hour. Today I make \$14.90. I don't believe it when they say they don't have enough money," said Felipe, a worker with 23 years in the plant [U.S. \$1 = CAN \$0.82].

Six years ago, the bosses dealt the workers a blow, forcing through a 40 percent cut in wages and benefits after a two-month strike failed to turn back the company's concession demands. Since then, workers have faced increased line speeds, a rising injury rate, longer hours, and brutal harassment by supervisors and foremen. With almost the same number of workers in the cut and kill,

plus some faster machinery, pork processing has gone from 4,000 to as many as 6,000 hogs per day. So workers are fed up and are fighting back.

As strikers fanned out to cover the four gates of the plant, bosses began gearing up to intimidate the pickets with security goons and video cameras.

At about 6 a.m. on November 1 a small army of strikers arrived to handle the morning shift. As workers signed in for picket duty, the mood was upbeat and defiant. By 9 a.m. the picket had swelled to about 100 strikers. Picket lines are up around the clock.

Many workers described the reasons they walked out. The bosses "treat us like we are machines, and we are not machines," said kill floor worker Nuno Flaminio, who has four and a half years' seniority.

"The union gives us strength when we are united and strong," said Laurenio Rego, a butcher in the cutting room with three years in the plant.

The months leading to Christmas are usually some of the busiest for the bosses. "They are losing \$1 million a day while we lose a dollar a day," said Le Dung, a butcher in the boning room.

"It's not fair, we do this hard job and

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Socialist Workers 2004 campaign: on to next 365 days!



Militant/John Naubert

Roger Calero, SWP candidate for president (fourth from left, with bullhorn), campaigns October 24 at picket line of cannery workers at Yakima, Washington state. Workers struck Snokist to demand livable wages and benefits (see article, page 4).

In the week leading up to the November 2 U.S. elections, Roger Calero, SWP candidate for president campaigned in Seattle, Yakima, Salt Lake City, Houston, Chicago, and New York. His last stop was in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, where he spoke at the

newly reopened SWP campaign hall that had been firebombed in September.

At the same time, Calero's running mate Arrin Hawkins, after returning from a visit to Iceland, campaigned in Denver

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What Socialist Workers Party candidates campaigned for:

- Workers' need to organize, mobilize union power to resist bosses' attacks; and to build a labor party, based on the unions, that fights in the interests of workers and farmers worldwide
- The right of semicolonial countries to get the sources of energy they need, including nuclear power, for economic development; immediate withdrawal of U.S. and allied foreign troops from Iraq

Pakistan gov't announces offer for talks with India over Kashmir

Washington favors stabilization of Pakistan-India border, which would aid U.S. 'war on terrorism'

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Pakistani president Gen. Pervez Musharraf announced October 26 proposals for negotiations with India on a settlement over Kashmir—a territory populated by an oppressed nationality that spans the border of both countries. Disputes over Kashmir have brought the two capitalist regimes to war twice, and at other times to the brink of armed conflict. Any settlement along the lines proposed by Musharraf would stabilize the border region.

The U.S. rulers have been pushing for such an outcome, pressing both governments to put aside their differences and join with Washington in its "global war on terrorism." Stabilization of the India-Pakistan border area would allow U.S. Special Forces to operate with greater ease in the region.

"Take Kashmir in its entirety. It has seven regions. Two of the regions are in Pakistan and five are in India.... Identify a region, demilitarize the region—troops out—and change its status," Musharraf suggested at a dinner in Islamabad attended by diplomats, government officials, and reporters. According to the *Times of India*, the Pakistani president said Kashmir's "status can be independence," or "joint control" by New Delhi and Islamabad, or under United

Nations "supervision."

Musharraf's announcement comes as the U.S. military has made substantial progress in working with the Pakistani armed forces around the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, especially, in hunting down remnants of

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Militant/Natalie Stake-Doucet

Workers picket Quality Meat Packers in Toronto, Ontario, November 1.

Cuba confronts new wave of blackouts

BY ARNOLD WEISSBERG

HAVANA—Due to an unplanned outage of a major electrical generating station in late September, Cuba was forced to resort to rolling blackouts and other conservation measures in order to maintain service to vital sectors—including hospitals, key industrial plants, and schools. The shortage of electrical power is not due to hurricane damage, which has been repaired, nor to a shortage of fuel for generators, as was the case during the 1990s.

In May, the Antonio Guiteras plant in Matanzas, which supplies 15 percent of Cuba's electricity, was shut down for routine maintenance, which was scheduled to last four weeks. During the shutdown critical parts of the generating apparatus were damaged. The plant is still off line, although a restart has begun. This delay left Cuba with a shortage of electrical capacity as other plants had to be shut down for maintenance.

This is a serious problem in a country that is so highly electrified. Cuba added more than 900,000 households to the electrical grid between 1990 and 2003, bringing electrification up to 96 percent of the country—compared to 86 percent for Latin America as a whole, and 34 percent for Africa. As a result, demand for electricity has jumped and the generating system has not been able to keep up despite major conservation efforts in recent years. The resulting unplanned blackouts disrupted education and many aspects of daily life, in addition to threatening the functioning of hospitals, schools, industry, and transportation.

Cuban president Fidel Castro made three recent TV appearances in order to lead a national discussion of the electricity problem. Castro's presence on the Round Table TV show September 28, along with leading Cuban experts on the country's electrical system, signaled the Cuban leadership's concern and its intention to deal with the problem in an organized way that involves the entire population. "People need to know as much about the electrical system as they do about hurricanes," Castro said.

The current problem is largely a technological one. To confront the pressures of high prices for oil in the world market and Washington's economic war, Havana began using Cuban crude oil for electrical generation in the 1990s. About 90 percent of domestic electrical demand is now met by using domestic crude. The problem is

that Cuban crude is high in impurities, particularly sulfur, which requires that the plants be shut down frequently for cleaning and other maintenance. A related problem is that many of the older plants are of old Soviet technology, which is inefficient and unreliable. These plants were converted with difficulty to use Cuban crude and have not functioned well since that time.

Appearing with Castro one evening was Carlos Lage, a government official who is often assigned responsibility for disaster planning and recovery. Lage announced a series of measures aimed at prioritizing electrical service for the most critical facilities, while work is being done to solve the technical problems.

Factories whose production could be made up later were shut down in October, even if this meant using hard currency for imports. Efforts are being made to move crucial activities out of the hours of peak demand, which are from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. The use of air conditioning was also discouraged during these hours as well. Stores will now close no later than 7 p.m.

The city of Havana was divided into five "circuits," each of which was scheduled to be blacked out five or six times a week about six hours each time. The schedule was published and widely distributed, so that the population knew what to expect. This marked an improvement over the previous weeks when power cuts came at all hours of the day and night. No area was to be cut between midnight and 7 a.m. Electricity distribution in the rest of the country was

organized similarly.

Cuba will maintain "summer time" (or daylight savings time) until the end of October 2005. Since this shifts the sunrise to a later time, schools open half an hour later so children don't have to walk to school in the dark. Consequently, the work day now begins half hour later so that parents can take their children to school. The end time was not changed, however, resulting in a half-hour shorter workday. The latter step may not be applied universally.

Workers in the plants that shut down in October continued getting their normal rate of pay. Likewise, those whose hours were shortened continued getting the same wages.

These measures, Lage said, are aimed not at ending the blackouts but at preventing the situation from getting worse. He noted that as the situation with generating capacity improved, some scheduled blackouts could be skipped. He also said that unscheduled blackouts would still be a possibility due to possible unexpected outages of generating stations. By the end of October, conservation measures had reduced electrical demand significantly and the number of blackouts in Havana was minimal.

In Havana, these measures appear to be applied universally. Half of the section of the city known as La Rampa was dark one



Cuban workers fix power lines knocked down by hurricane in August. Government is now confronting problem of Soviet-era unreliable electrical generation plants that use Cuban crude oil containing high impurities.

recent Saturday night. This includes some tourist hotels and a major jazz club. On top of the planned blackout, an unscheduled one hit the other half of the area that night, emptying a movie theater and several bars.

The situation has sparked a national discussion. Many Cubans say that it will be necessary to buy new technology to replace the outmoded Soviet-era equipment.

Havana bars U.S. dollars in cash transactions

BY ARNOLD WEISSBERG

HAVANA—The U.S. dollar will no longer be accepted for cash transactions here effective November 8, the Cuban government has announced. The use of the dollar has been legal since 1993, and all imported goods are priced in and sold for dollars. In its place, Cuba will use the "convertible peso," whose value is one dollar. Cubans and foreigners can freely exchange dollars for convertible pesos until November 8, after which there will be a 10 percent fee for the swap.

In announcing the measure on the television program Roundtable on October 25, President Fidel Castro said it was taken in

response to the U.S. government's stepped-up economic pressure on Cuba. Washington has sought to block the use of the dollar in Cuba's international operations, forcing Havana to go through expensive currency swaps in order to buy and sell internationally.

"The U.S. government has increased its pressures and threats on foreign banks to prevent Cuba from depositing money abroad to fulfill its trade obligations, the dollars spent by the population and by foreign visitors in the island's outlets," said a Cuban Central Bank resolution announcing the new measure.

The Cuban president cited a decision by the U.S. Federal Reserve in May to fine Switzerland's largest bank, UBS AG, \$100 million for allegedly sending U.S. dollars to Cuba, Libya, Iran, and Yugoslavia in violation of U.S. sanctions against those countries.

The purpose of the switch to the convertible peso is to minimize the risks caused by Washington's actions, Castro said. The 10 percent fee will help cover the risks and costs assumed by Cuba in handling U.S. dollars, the Cuban president said.

The Cuban government decriminalized the use of U.S. dollars in 1993 as part of a series of measures taken when Cuba abruptly lost its aid from and favorable trade with Soviet-bloc countries at the end of the 1980s. Since then Cuba has had to purchase most imported goods in dollars and other hard currencies at world market

prices. Tourism has been promoted as a needed source of hard currency to be able to purchase such imports.

Decriminalizing the use of the dollar and other measures were part of curbing inflation and increasing production. For Cubans with access to dollars, it has made it easier to acquire basic goods that are in short supply in pesos. At the same time, as Cuban leaders have pointed out, this situation has led to widening social inequalities between those with and without dollars.

Tourist-oriented businesses in Cuba, including hotels, cafeterias, stores, car rental companies, and taxis, accept U.S. dollars. A substantial number of Cubans have access to dollars through family remittances or because they work in tourism.

Prices of goods sold in dollars will not change except that now they will be sold for convertible pesos. Government officials said the possession of dollars, and every other currency, remains legal and will not be penalized. Dollar bank accounts remain legal, and account holders may draw out either convertible pesos or dollars.

Remittances sent to Cubans from abroad, if sent in dollars, will be subject to the 10 percent exchange fee. Cubans receiving remittances have been urged to arrange to have the funds sent in other currencies, such as euros or Canadian dollars, which can be swapped for convertible pesos with no fee. Credit card and other non-cash transactions will not be subject to the fee.

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THE MILITANT

Find out about Utah miners' fight for union

After a 10-month strike, Co-Op miners in Huntington, Utah, returned to work July 12 and have continued the battle for the union from inside. From day one of the strike the 'Militant' has given weekly coverage to this important labor struggle. New subscribers can get two back issues of their choice to find out more about it. Don't miss a single issue!



March 22 picket line outside Co-Op mine near Huntington, Utah.

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U.S. offensive in Iraq

Continued from front page

of Iraq under the Saddam Hussein regime, were captured in recent days.

The Sunni Triangle in central Iraq, where Fallujah and Ramadi are located, was the strongest base of the Hussein government. U.S. military officials charge that businessmen loyal to Hussein are funding the militias and that former members of Hussein's military are helping to organize them. They also charge that Tiwhad and Jihad, a group led by Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, is responsible for many of the attacks on U.S. and Iraqi troops.

Allawi issued a "last chance" offer to intermediaries attempting to strike a deal to avoid a large-scale offensive on Fallujah, according to an October 29 al-Jazeera TV report.

A negotiator for Fallujah's Sunni Muslim council said the group would agree to restart talks with the government provided that Baghdad halted the weeks-long air strikes by U.S. warplanes on the city. Al-Jazeera said the group also would demand that thousands of civilian residents who have fled Fallujah be allowed to return and be compensated for damages, that U.S. troops remove a checkpoint from the eastern entrance to the city, and that they would push for the formation of an Iraqi National Guard force that would include local residents to keep peace between U.S. troops and militias.

Neither Allawi nor the U.S. military are likely to accept these proposals. A similar Fallujah Brigade headed by former Iraqi army officers was dissolved in September after it refused to engage the militias. That brigade was established as part of a compromise after U.S. Marines laid siege of Fallujah in April following the killing of

four military "contractors," whose burned remains were suspended from a bridge over the Euphrates river.

Allawi has refused to address any of the demands made by the negotiators, insisting that they first turn over al-Zarqawi and other leaders of Tiwhad and Jihad. The group has taken responsibility for a number of beheadings of hostages and bombings of military and civilian targets, including an attack on a sewage plant that killed dozens of Iraqi children. The U.S. administration has offered a \$25 million reward for information leading to al-Zarqawi's capture or death. Muslim clerics in Fallujah say al-Zarqawi is not in the city.

The impending offensive against Fallujah and Ramadi is expected to be the toughest in the campaign by the interim government and its U.S. sponsor to bring some 30 cities, said to be strongholds of anti-government militias, under control of the Allawi regime before national elections scheduled for January.

"We're gearing up to do an operation and when we're told to go we'll go," said Brig. Gen. Dennis Hejlik, deputy commander of the First Marine Expeditionary Force camped near Fallujah. "When we do go, we'll whack them," said Hejlik, according to the Associated Press.

Militias in the city have begun fortifying their positions, said the AP, blocking roads with barriers and cars. A leading Sunni cleric in Baghdad, Sheik Mahdi al-Sumaidaei, warned that should the Allawi government order an assault on Fallujah Sunni clerics in the capital will issue a *fatwa*, or religious decree ordering Muslims to launch protests in the streets and a civil disobedience campaign. Others have threatened to boycott the upcoming



Getty Images/Patrick Baz

U.S. Marines guard position in Ramadi, 60 miles west of Baghdad, October 30, during operations aimed at putting city under control of Iraqi interim government.

elections.

Actions by militias in Ramadi have increased since the U.S. encirclement of Fallujah began in mid-October. A front-page article in the October 21 *New York Times* described the provincial government in the city as being on the verge of collapse. "Just about everybody has resigned or is on the verge of resigning," the article quotes Second Lt. Ryan Schranel as saying. Schranel's platoon does 24-hour guard duty at the government's provincial offices.

The provincial governor, Muhammad Awad, the article states, doubles as Ramadi's mayor after the previous governor resigned following the kidnapping of his three sons and the killing of the deputy governor. No one has stepped forward to lead the city hall.

Still dozens of government employees come to work at the provincial offices

each day. "This is not Fallujah," said Lt. Col. Randall P. Newman, a battalion commander. "We want to keep this place from becoming a Fallujah."

Speaking from his office in Ramadi, Maj. Gen. Natonski dismissed the view that city authorities faced an imminent collapse, according to the *London Telegraph*. "Ramadi is not going to fall," he said. "We don't have to worry about that."

As preparations are being made for the assault, the British medical journal *Lancet* released on its web site findings of a research team headed by a Johns Hopkins professor that estimates at least 100,000 Iraqi civilians have died as a "direct or indirect consequence" of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. The figure includes not only "violent deaths" but those from diseases spread because of the conditions of military occupation. The report says that the large majority of deaths from combat are concentrated in the so-called Sunni Triangle, with two-thirds of them having taken place in Fallujah. The printed edition of the journal will appear after the U.S. presidential elections.

The survey, whose results are based on a poll, not a census, is drawn from a sampling of interviews with 988 households from 33 randomly selected locations throughout Iraq. The participants in the survey were questioned about births and deaths in their households for the 14 months prior to the invasion and the 17 months following.

Various news reports already said the *Lancet* figure is questionable, since it is just an estimate and translates to an average of 166 deaths a day since the invasion.

The Bush administration has declined to give estimates of civilian deaths in Iraq since the beginning of the war. When asked about Iraqi deaths in the 1991 U.S.-led war against Iraq, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell—then head of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff—replied, "It's really not a number I'm terribly interested in."

UN General Assembly: 179-4 against U.S. embargo of Cuba

BY SAM MANUEL

UNITED NATIONS—For the 13th year in a row the UN General Assembly approved a resolution calling for an end to the U.S.-imposed embargo against Cuba. The resolution passed with 179 votes in favor, 4 against, and 1 abstention. The U.S. government was joined by those of Israel, Marshall Islands, and Palau in voting no. Micronesia's representative abstained. The vote was similar to last year when the same number of governments voted in favor, two against, and two abstained.

Speaking in Spanish, U.S. representative Oliver Garcia, a State Department adviser and former ambassador to Nicaragua, told the assembly in diplomatic terms that U.S. policy towards Cuba is none of the UN's business. "Relations between the United States and Cuba is a bilateral issue and should not be brought before this assembly," Garcia said. He claimed that Washington "does not interfere with Cuba's trade with other countries."

Speaking just before the vote, Cuban foreign minister Felipe Pérez Roque explained that the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992—also known as the Torricelli Act—prohibits subsidiaries of U.S. companies in other countries from carrying out commercial transactions with Cuba. The embargo was further tightened by the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996, frequently referred to as the Helms-Burton law after its principal sponsors in Congress, which was passed under the Clinton administration.

Pérez Roque cited examples of how these laws are used by Washington to do what Garcia claimed his government is not carrying out. He said the Canadian company Picker was not allowed to sell X-ray equipment to Cuba because it is a subsidiary of a U.S. company. The French company Bull was unable to complete the sale of ATM machines to Havana because it was purchased in the process by the U.S. company Diebold. And Cuba can no longer purchase heat resistant bricks used in the production of cement because the Mexican company Refractarios Mexicanos was acquired by the U.S. company Harbison Walker Refractories.

A number of representatives of countries that spoke in the debate—including Vietnam, Syria, Iran, Zimbabwe, and Sudan—explained that their countries were or are now the target of sanctions by Washington. "As a nation that has suffered

from such blockades, Vietnam extends its full solidarity to the people of Cuba in voting for this resolution," said the Vietnamese representative.

"The U.S. justifies its embargo against Cuba on the claim of human rights violations in Cuba," said the representative from Tanzania. "But Cuban doctors are guaranteeing the human right to health care to women, children, and the elderly in the remotest parts of our country," he said.

Several of Washington's imperialist allies—including representatives from Japan, and Australia—objected to the "extra-territorial" application of the embargo's provisions. This year Washington fined two European airlines thousands of dollars charging that they transported Cuban goods on flights routed through U.S. territory. Two Italian commercial firms were also fined \$30,000 each for their transactions with Cuba.

Some made it clear they had a similar political stance toward Havana as Washington, no matter what their position was toward the resolution. Speaking on behalf of the European Union, for example, Arjan Hamburger, deputy EU ambassador from the Netherlands, said that while the European Union opposed Washington's unilateral sanctions against Cuba, the EU also "strongly condemns the current human rights situation in Cuba."

Pérez Roque responded that the EU representative's remarks were typical of its "double standard." The Cuban diplomat condemned what he called the silence of the EU representative on U.S.-led military actions in Fallujah or regarding the "rights of immigrants in the United States." With growing racism and attacks against immigrants in Europe, he said, "Cuba does not recognize the moral authority of the EU to condemn Cuba."

Caspian Sea oil pipeline to Turkey to open in 2005

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

A British Petroleum-led consortium of oil companies announced that in 2005 it will put into production a pipeline to transport oil from Baku on the Caspian Sea to the Turkish port of Ceyhan. Recoverable reserves of oil from fields off Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, however, fall short of the initial hopes of imperialist investors when they began exploration there.

The 1,054-mile Baku-Ceyhan pipeline travels through Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey before reaching the port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean.

"Little additional oil has been found in the Azerbaijani section of the Caspian in the past decade," the *Wall Street Journal* reported October 22. "Contrary to previous expectations, Caspian oil won't ease the tightening hold of Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf oil titans." Oil production from the region will double to 2 million barrels a day by 2015, but even this will not nearly match projected increases of 15 million barrels a day from OPEC nations over the same period.

Reserves from Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are estimated at between 20 billion and 35 billion barrels, says the business daily. The higher figure would put the oil deposits on a par with that of Libya, and half the size of Venezuela's reserves. By contrast, Saudi

Arabia holds some 260 billion barrels of proven reserves. Oil from the Caspian is "not the substitute for Persian Gulf oil that we've been looking for," lamented one Washington-based energy industry analyst.

The U.S. rulers have made deeper inroads into the former Soviet republics at the expense of Moscow, and the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline plays an important role in its plans: the 15-year project bypasses Russian territory in directing new oil discoveries found in coastal waters off Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan.

U.S. deputy assistant secretary for European and Eurasian affairs Laura Kennedy, on a recent trip to the region, told Azeri president Ilham Aliyev October 28 that the developing collaboration between their two governments had reached a level of "strategic partnership." U.S. Special Forces and Marines completed a training program with the Georgian military earlier this year.

An agreement between the Russian and Azeri governments calls for the annual transport of 2.5 million tons of oil through Russian territory in the Baku-Novorossiisk pipeline. The deputy prime minister of Azerbaijan said the Baku-Ceyhan



Workers win strike at soap factory in Scotland

BY CAROLINE BELLAMY

GLASGOW, Scotland—"We won, it doesn't matter which way you look at it," Soapworks striker Rita Coletta told the *Militant*. "And we won more than money. We achieved what the company never thought we would. They thought we weren't strong enough, that we would never go out on the street."

Sixty-two Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) members at the soap factory here owned by Body Shop began a series of one- and two-day strikes August 30, over shift allowances, respect for the union, and dignity on the job. After the unionists stepped up the fight with a week-long walkout September 28-October 5, the bosses reversed their intransigent stance and offered a 3 percent increase on basic pay and 1 percent on shift allowances in the second and third year. The extra shift allowance is tied to productivity increases.

Coletta was one of a group of five strikers who, in a buoyant mood, discussed their experiences with *Militant* reporters.

"The most important thing was that the union came out of it strong," said John McMahon, one of three shop stewards at the plant. "If we had stayed out longer than the eight weeks, some people would have gone back, we would have split the workforce and in the end the company would have won."

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The Israeli parliament decided October 27 to back Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's proposal to pull Zionist settlements from the Gaza Strip. The vote is the latest step by the Israeli ruling class in its drive to establish Israel as a walled-in state that has long-term viability as a junior imperialist power in the Middle East. The vote came after Israeli troops concluded a several week occupation of northern Gaza, aimed at creating a buffer zone to stop rockets fired by the Palestinian group Hamas from reaching Israel.

The new Israeli strategy is being advanced unilaterally by the Zionist rulers to legitimize their long-term grab of Palestinian lands in the occupied territories and make the Israeli state more secure from "terrorist attacks."

The plan—which has Washington's backing—includes not only pulling out the settlements from Gaza, but annexing to Israel a number of the largest West Bank settlement blocks and refusing the right of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees to return to their land. Under this plan, Israeli military forces will continue patrolling Gaza's coastline, air space, and land borders. They will also retain military control over the West Bank.

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The dismantling of the settlements would be carried out in phases over the next year, and each phase will require approval from the prime minister's cabinet. Sharon fired two of his cabinet members for voting against "disengagement" in the parliamentary vote. Four other Likud ministers, led by former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, voted for the proposal but threatened to resign unless Sharon agrees to hold a national referendum on the pullout. The Israeli prime minister has rejected calls for a referendum on a withdrawal from Gaza, saying it would "lead to terrible tensions and a rupture in the public."

The task of maintaining a permanent military cordon around the settlements

In the United Kingdom, anti-union laws allow employers to sack (fire) workers after eight weeks on strike.

The workers are not overly concerned at the three-year deal. "It means we can't strike for three years over pay," said Linda Robertson. "But next year we'll be looking to improve sick pay and attendance allowances."

"We think we can do the productivity increases," said McMahon, saying union members will be keeping a log of company errors to make sure that workers don't take the blame if productivity is affected.

Soapworks bosses caved in, he said, because "they couldn't afford it any more. They are five weeks behind on their orders. We told them we'd be out until Christmas—and we said that we had a minibus hired to go down to Body Shop headquarters and protest. That was a threat, but we'd have done it." The Body Shop headquarters is about 500 miles away, on the English south coast.

During the fight, union members leafleted Glasgow retail outlets of the Body Shop, which makes marketing capital out of selling "ethical" beauty products. Anita Roddick, "green campaigner," founder, director, and major shareholder in the Body Shop was a guest on a radio phone-in show during the series of strikes.

"We phoned up, but they wouldn't put us through, nobody with a Scottish ac-

Israeli parliament backs Gaza 'disengagement' plan

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The Israeli parliament decided October 27 to back Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's proposal to pull Zionist settlements from the Gaza Strip. The vote is the latest step by the Israeli ruling class in its drive to establish Israel as a walled-in state that has long-term viability as a junior imperialist power in the Middle East. The vote came after Israeli troops concluded a several week occupation of northern Gaza, aimed at creating a buffer zone to stop rockets fired by the Palestinian group Hamas from reaching Israel.

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The task of maintaining a permanent military cordon around the settlements

in Gaza, a center of political and military resistance to the Israeli occupation, has proven to be an insoluble headache for Tel Aviv. The Israeli government aims to turn over Gaza to the Palestinian Author-



Workers at Soapworks, a Scotland soap factory, picket September 21 outside plant. Militant/Caroline Bellamy

cent," said Robertson. The Body Shop owns about 500 stores in 50 countries and many franchises. The company posted profits of £29 million (\$48 million) last year.

More than two-thirds of the strikers staffed picket lines, often festooning trees outside the factory with banners made from sheets, painted with slogans attacking the bosses. They also spoke at union and other political meetings, col-

lecting several thousand pounds in donations. "Lorries were just coming by and giving us checks," one worker said. The funds raised were matched by the national T&G, and Tony Woodley, T&G general secretary, paid the picket line a visit. "That really boosted morale," said Coletta.

"We've learned so much" said Ellen Brown. "At first I was nervous about shouting 'Scab!' at managers, but that soon wore off. I see them now for what they really are.

"We never realized how much unity there could be, that we could stick together," she said. "But if you're really serious, it can be done. And we have a better outlook now. We'd go and help other people. Any solidarity needed, we'll give it."

Xerardo Arias contributed to this article.

Cannery workers stay strong in Yakima strike

BY CECELIA MORIARITY

YAKIMA, Washington—"Everybody in the valley is looking at the strike," said a retired Boise Cascade lumber mill worker visiting the picket line of striking cannery workers here to show his solidarity.

About 270 members of Western Council of Industrial Workers (WCIW) Local 3023 went out on strike September 23 after rejecting several contract offers from Snokist, a fruit canning and distributing company owned by growers. The WCIW is the industrial section of the Carpenters and Joiners Union.

The striking workers joined the WCIW in 2002 after the company terminated all employees' medical and dental benefits and fired 400 workers. The bosses then rehired 200 of the fired workers at \$2-\$3 an hour less. Others were forced to remain employees of a temporary agency, at minimum wage. The company employs about 80 workers year-round in the cannery warehouse. The other employees work during the different fruit seasons, packing cherries, pears, or apples.

The company's "offers" do not include restoration of any health-care benefits or wage levels for employees—many with decades of work at Snokist. This year's apple crop set a sales record of \$1.16 billion.

Snokist workers have now been on strike for more than five weeks. They maintain picket lines around the clock, seven days a week. The morning picket lines are large. "Usually 200 to 250 strikers and supporters from other workplaces come out every morning to show the company and replacement workers we are determined and have support," said Rogelio Montes, a WCIW organizer.

Strikers are maintaining round-the-clock picket lines at the Terrace Heights plant and are beginning to reach out for solidarity.

Several strikers attended a rally in Seattle October 16 for Group Health Workers, members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), who are facing cuts in their health insurance benefits. The SEIU local president thanked the delegation from the platform, along with a group of farm workers who came from Florida, where they are protesting low wages for tomato harvesting.

At the end of October, strikers held an information candlelight vigil at the house of Valerie Woerner, Snokist's chief executive officer, to protest the bosses' refusal to negotiate an acceptable contract. Another vigil was planned at the house of the chairman of the growers' board. The largest growers in the area maintain seats on the 12-member growers' cooperative board that runs the company.

The strikers received a boost from the news that on October 21 employees of

Grandview Foods won union representation with Teamsters Local 760. Grandview Foods is a frozen-fruit processing plant in the area. Production and maintenance workers voted 97-4 to join the Teamsters after the National Labor Relations Board ruled they were joint employees of the company and of Barret Business Services, a temporary agency.

Barret Business Services is supplying Snokist with replacement workers during the strike in Yakima.

Delta cuts pilots' pay 32 percent

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Delta Air Lines and the pilots' union announced a tentative deal October 28 that would allow the company to squeeze \$1 billion from the pilots in salary and benefit cuts.

The concession agreement between the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) and the country's third-largest airline includes a 32.5 percent pay cut for Delta's 7,000 pilots, a five-year wage freeze, and a freeze in the pension plan. Future contributions for the pilots' pensions will be made through a 401(k) retirement savings plan, which ties pensions to the ups and downs of the stock market. The pact also includes provisions attacking conditions on the job, according to media reports.

In exchange for the steep givebacks, the bosses offered the pilots an option to purchase a 15 percent stake in the airline. Union officials had earlier suggested a compromise of pay cuts and other concessions worth \$705 million, but they went along with the steeper cuts the bosses insisted on. The pilots will begin voting on the proposal November 1.

According to *CNN/Money*, the head of the pilots' union called the new deal "painful," but rationalized it as "essential to keep the airline out of bankruptcy court."

Eighteen months ago, Delta began squeezing the pilots for major concessions. Stepping up the pressure over the past few months, Gerald Grinstein, the company's chief executive officer, threatened to file for bankruptcy in May. In September he announced plans to slash 7,000 jobs by 2006 if the pilots did not agree to the givebacks. The

company also announced that its salaried employees would take a 10 percent pay cut, reductions in sick and vacation time, and lose their health-care benefits after retirement. On October 22, Delta officials said the airline was ready to file for bankruptcy within a week if the pilots' union did not acquiesce to their demands.

The drive for concessions at Delta follows similar moves by other major airlines. Last month, US Airways tossed out the contracts with its unions and pocketed hundreds of millions of dollars in reduced wages and benefits the airline claimed it needed to avoid liquidation. American Airlines last year used the bankruptcy scare to wrench \$1.8 billion in cuts in wages and benefits from its employees.

To justify these assaults, the employers have cited stiffer competition from lower-fare airlines—such as JetBlue and AirTran—and rising fuel costs. One of these "discount" airlines, though, ATA, filed for bankruptcy protection October 26 in Indianapolis.

Meanwhile, as the airline bosses have won most of their concession demands with scarcely more than a whimper from the union officialdom, the owners' ax is likely to keep hacking away, possibly against the same or other sections of the workforce.

"Bankruptcy remains a possibility," said a statement from Delta's CEO, welcoming the pilots' concessions. And United Airlines, "whose pilots' pay has already been cut 25 percent in its two years in bankruptcy, plans to outline plans next month for another round of cuts," the *New York Times* reported October 29.

Pakistan-India border

Continued from front page

the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan—which the Pakistani rulers had earlier backed—and “terrorist” groups such as al-Qaeda. At the same time, Washington has strengthened its military cooperation with the Indian government.

New Delhi’s initial reaction to Musharraf’s proposals was chilly. “We do not believe that Jammu and Kashmir is a subject on which discussions can be held through the media,” India’s foreign ministry spokesman, Navtej Sarna, told reporters. The regime in India has accused Islamabad of fanning a 15-year-old rebellion against New Delhi’s rule in Jammu and Kashmir state, where more than 40,000 people have died in the conflict since 1989.

Talks between the two regimes are expected in late November, when Pakistani prime minister Shaukat Aziz meets with the Indian prime minister, Manmohan Singh, at a regional meeting in New Delhi.

An opposition alliance in Pakistan of parties self-described as Islamic, the Muttahida Majlis-I-Amal, has rejected the president’s proposals. “Musharraf has no right to suggest a solution of the Kashmir dispute,” Qazi Hussein Ahmed, leader of Jamaat-I-Islami, Pakistan’s largest “Islamic” party, said at a news conference October 27. “He is a military ruler and doesn’t command the support of the Pakistani people.”

Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Fall Subscription Drive Aug. 28-Nov. 21: Week 9 of 12

Country	Militant		PM		
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold
SWEDEN	30	28	93%	5	3
ICELAND**	30	27	90%	2	0
UNITED KINGDOM					
London	50	43	86%	12	6
Edinburgh	25	20	80%	2	0
UK total	75	63	84%	14	6
AUSTRALIA	55	38	69%	8	4
NEW ZEALAND					
Auckland	45	34	76%	1	1
Christchurch	35	20	57%	1	0
N.Z. total	80	54	68%	2	1
UNITED STATES					
Houston**	80	71	89%	20	10
Des Moines	65	54	83%	25	21
Craig, CO**	65	52	80%	20	7
Detroit	40	32	80%	10	8
New York	180	141	78%	70	41
Seattle**	55	43	78%	12	10
Newark	90	68	76%	25	17
Price, UT	50	37	74%	20	14
Birmingham	40	29	73%	8	3
Omaha	55	37	67%	45	17
Cleveland	40	25	63%	10	4
Boston	100	62	62%	40	17
Atlanta	80	49	61%	20	11
Tampa	40	24	60%	10	8
Twin Cities	105	62	59%	40	21
Washington	115	67	58%	21	12
Chicago	100	57	57%	40	27
Los Angeles	150	84	56%	50	39
Pittsburgh	65	36	55%	4	2
Philadelphia	95	49	52%	10	0
Miami	100	42	42%	50	6
San Francisco	125	51	41%	35	15
NE Pennsylvania	55	21	38%	15	10
U.S. total	1890	1193	63%	600	320
CANADA					
Montreal	32	23	72%	12	5
Toronto	85	47	55%	18	4
CANADA total	117	70	60%	30	9
14-day campaign*	-	179	-	-	31
Int’l totals	2245	1652	72%	680	374
Goal/Should be	2300	1725	75%	550	413

*14 days of campaigning in New York Aug. 21–Sept. 3 at protests and events leading up to and during the Republican convention

**raised goal

	IN THE UNIONS				
	Militant		PM		
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold
AUSTRALIA					
AMIEU	8	5	63%		
UNITED STATES					
UMWA	30	22	73%	15	6
UNITE	50	28	56%	40	15
UFCW	135	67	50%	150	65
Total	215	117	54%	205	86
NEW ZEALAND					
MWU	2	1	50%		
NDU	2	1	50%		
Total	4	2	50%		
SWEDEN					
Livs	2	1	50%	1	0
CANADA					
UFCW	6	3	50%	3	2
UNITE	2	0	0%	1	0
Total	8	3	38%	4	2
ICELAND					
Hlíf	2	1	50%		
Efling	2	0	0%		
Total	4	1	25%		

AMIEU—Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union; Livs—Food Workers Union; MWU—Meat Workers Union; NDU—National Distribution Union; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA—United Mine Workers of America; Hlíf—Union of Unskilled Workers in Hafnarfjörður; Efling—Union of Unskilled Workers in Reykjavík.

Socialists continue campaigning, aim to win more than 2,800 new readers to ‘Militant,’ ‘PM’



Militant/John Naubert

Supporters of the socialist campaign bring the *Militant*, its Spanish-language sister publication *Perspectiva Mundial*, and a selection of Pathfinder books to the picket line of striking cannery workers from the Snokist plant in the Yakima Valley, Washington, October 25, during a visit by Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Róger Calero (see front-page article).

By reaching out to working-class resistance in the Northwest, and bringing others along with them as they do, participants in the international *Militant/PM* subscription drive from Seattle have kept ahead of pace on their local subscription goal.

The drive, which aims to win more than 2,800 new readers to the *Militant* and *PM*, ends November 21. So far, 1,652 new readers have been won to the *Militant* and 374 to *PM* in the first nine weeks of the 12-week campaign—that’s 73 *Militant* subscriptions and 39 *PM* subscriptions behind pace. In the final weeks, campaigners will need to step up the effort to make and surpass the goals.

This effort coincides with a special Pathfinder Supersaver sale, in which more than two-dozen Pathfinder titles on the history and practice of the revolutionary workers movement are steeply discounted through November 30 (see ad on page 7).

—PAUL PEDERSON

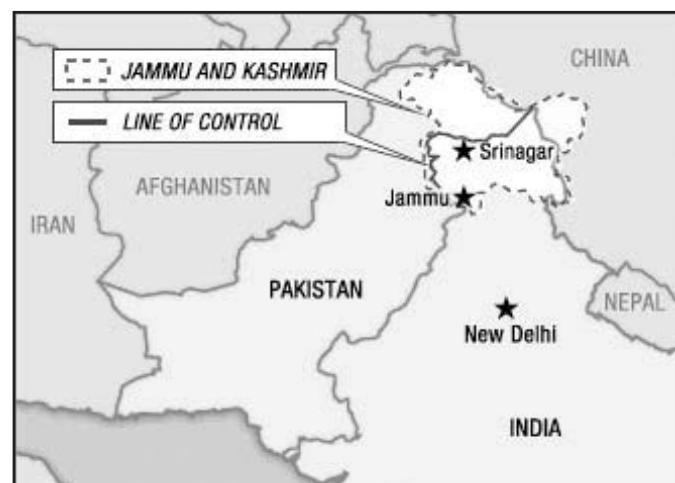
ties to aid the U.S. imperialist invasion that overthrew the Taliban-led Afghan government in 2001. Earlier this year, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell dubbed Pakistan “a major non-NATO ally for purposes of our future military relations.”

Under a deal made last year with the opposition alliance, Musharraf had promised to step down as head of the military by December 31 in exchange for its support for changes to the constitution that gave him sweeping powers to dismiss both houses of parliament. After dropping hints that he would renege on the deal, Musharraf claimed that resigning as army commander could weaken his authority to aid the U.S. military attacks in Pakistan and his proposals to New Dehli on Kashmir.

Washington, “which has in the past encouraged Musharraf to keep his pledge, now says it is a matter for Pakistanis to decide,” Reuters reported.

This year Islamabad has launched three major military operations along the border with Afghanistan in collaboration with U.S. forces. The latest one in June involved 20,000 Pakistani troops attacking local groups accused of opposing Musharraf’s regime and collaborating with al-Qaeda.

The Pakistani ruling class was pressured by Washington to open the country’s air space and other facil-



Map shows disputed territory of Kashmir. Line of control is division between northern region of Kashmir dominated by Pakistan and southern area, which is a province of India.

Meat packers strike in Toronto

Continued from front page

they’re not paying us right,” said Amado Panda, 26, who has been on the job eight months.

Many other workers were quick to offer solidarity the first morning of the strike. Municipal outside (nonoffice) workers, members of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 416, who have a yard adjacent to the plant, donated wood for the burn barrels that began to spring up at the entrances. A truck driver who is a member of the Chemical and Allied Workers union telephoned his dispatcher to report he was not going to cross the picket line to pick up a load of waste.

Throughout the morning, strikers talked to each other in a variety of languages. Instructions from picket captains were translated into Mandarin for those of Chinese origin.

A television crew from a local community Portuguese-language station interviewed strikers. Towards noon the atmosphere on the line became festive as one striker began to play Portuguese music on his car stereo.

The large size of the October 28 union meeting to decide on the contract reflected the anger and determination of the workers to fight back. Many made their way through a massive traffic jam that night after work to get to the meeting at a hotel in north Toronto. Despite the recommendation of the negotiating committee to accept the company’s offer, workers voted 282-94 to reject it and go on strike.

The proposal the workers turned down codifies the large pay cut the bosses imposed six years ago. It included no new concessions and provides for some token improvements, including a small wage increase over three years.

The union meeting was switched from its previously planned weekend date to a weeknight at the demand of

the company. The bosses assumed the tentative agreement would be accepted, and had planned to gear up production for the following week, or, as it turned out, to clear out the plant in the event of a strike. The tentative deal had an October 28 midnight deadline. The company offered a \$500 signing bonus if it was accepted that evening.

Six years ago, the big majority of the workers were of Portuguese origin. The plant sits in the middle of Toronto’s Portuguese community. After the 1998-99 strike, the bosses began hiring immigrant workers from Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and elsewhere. They counted on this to create obstacles to unity among the union members.

Over the past weeks, in the countdown to October 31, this proved not to be the case. Workers took a number of plant-wide actions that showed growing unity. Veterans of the last strike, for example, drafted a leaflet appealing to all workers to stick together. The flyer was translated into Mandarin, enabling the many workers of Chinese origin to read it. In early October, workers learned the company would try to limit to 20 minutes per week the time permitted for using the washrooms outside of official breaks. In response, the vast majority boycotted a lunchtime “employee appreciation” barbecue organized by the bosses.

As this issue goes to press, union officials report the company had not responded to their October 28 phone call, after the union meeting, informing them of the rejection of the tentative agreement and the union’s decision to strike.

Natalie Stake-Doucet and John Steele are members of UFCW Local 175 at Quality Meat Packers and Toronto Abattoirs, respectively, in Toronto.

N.Y. meeting: The real results of the U.S. election campaign before the vote took place

BY MICHAEL ITALIE
AND MARTIN KOPPEL

NEW YORK—Nearly 350 people attended a public meeting here titled “Before the Vote: The Real Results of the 2004 U.S. Election Campaign.” The event, held two days ahead of the presidential elections, was sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party National Committee and the Young Socialists. It assessed the accomplishments of the Socialist Workers Party 2004 election campaign and the political course the U.S. capitalist rulers have been following at home and abroad and why they will continue it, regardless of whether the Democrats or Republicans control the White House and Congress.

SWP national secretary Jack Barnes, the main speaker, took up key questions in U.S. and world politics, none of which had been addressed by any of the candidates of the capitalist parties. At the heart of U.S. politics today, he said, is the fact that the unions remain at center stage, and that for increasing numbers of working people today, mobilizing union power or organizing unions in face of the employers’ assaults has become an immediate, practical necessity.

Barnes also described how the U.S. rulers, to meet the challenges to their declining international order, are transforming their global military posture and political world strategy. This includes a shift in the U.S. armed forces to smaller, more mobile units poised for rapid deployment around the world.

These developments, he explained, pose the kind of steps needed today to meet the opportunities to build a revolutionary workers party whose goal is to lead millions of working people to confront the ruling billionaire families and take political power.

The meeting celebrated the culmination of the Socialist Workers campaign. Over the past months, many in the audience had been energetically campaigning for the Socialist Workers ticket of Róger Calero for president and Arrin Hawkins for vice president as well as local candidates in 22 states and the District of Columbia.

At the public event, Betsy Farley, organizer of the SWP organizing committee in Hazleton, eastern Pennsylvania, reported on the successful reopening of the socialist campaign hall there. The campaign hall, now reconstructed, had been firebombed on September 11. The arson attack badly damaged the front of the hall and damaged books and campaign literature. Supporters of political rights across the United States and other countries sent letters of protest to the city administration calling on them to prosecute those responsible.

Farley said this broad public backing and generous contributions made it possible to reopen the campaign center within a few weeks. “This victory belongs to everyone who supported us in this fight,” she said, thanking all who were part of the effort.

One of the featured speakers, Roberto Villanueva, described the new stage in the battle by workers at the Co-Op coal mine in Huntington, Utah, to win representation by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). On Sept. 22, 2003, the bosses at C.W. Mining, known as the Co-Op mine, fired 75 miners after learning that they were talking to the UMWA about organizing. The mine workers were angry about unsafe job conditions, said Villanueva, and being paid between \$5.25 and \$7 an hour when wages for underground miners nationwide average at least \$17 per hour. The unionists there turned the company lockout into a strike.

During a strike that lasted nearly 10 months, the miners won support from unions and others in the West, across the country, and around the world. The miners’ stick-to-itiveness and the solidarity they won, said Villanueva, brought pressure to bear on the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which in June ruled that the company had illegally fired the miners, that it must give them back pay, and that a union representation election must be held with the UMWA as an option. The company was forced to allow all the miners who wanted to, to return to their jobs, where they have



Militant photos by Lawrence Mikesh

Audience at October 31 meeting in New York (above). The featured speakers were Jack Barnes (right), national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, and Roberto Villanueva, speaking on the new stage of the Utah Co-Op miners’ battle for a union and the political fight against the harassment lawsuit by the Kingstons, the mine owners.

continued their fight for a union.

Villanueva said more solidarity is needed—and the miners are anxious to reach out to others to explain what they are fighting for—in order to press the NLRB to set a date for the union election, and to exclude members of the Kingston family, which owns the mine, from voting in the election.

In addition to the company’s war of harassment against the unionists, he said, “pro-UMWA miners at Co-Op face the pressure to leave the job and the fight by seeking employment in nearby mines that are hiring workers at much higher wages.” The foremen at Co-Op bait the miners, saying that if they were smart they’d go for a better-paying job. “They think that by waving dollars in our face we can be bought,” said one miner, according to Villanueva.

The miners are also facing a lawsuit the company filed against the UMWA September 24. “This is a harassment and nuisance suit,” Norton Sandler, national director of the Socialist Workers 2004 Campaign, told the audience. “It is designed to take the focus off the fight for a union.” The lawsuit charges the UMWA with violation of labor law, and places charges of libel and defamation against a number of unions and other organizations that support the union fight, as well as numerous media outlets that have covered the struggle at Co-Op.

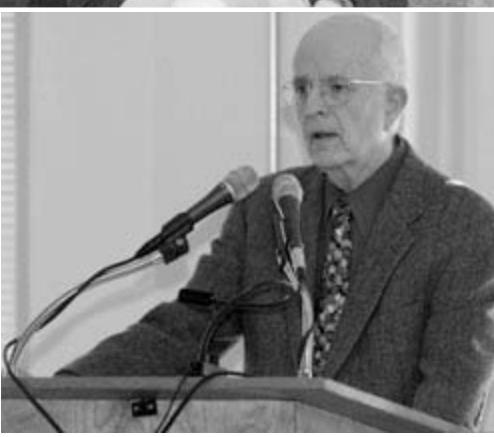
Sandler said the *Militant* is one target of the company lawsuit. “Twenty-four of the 80 pages of the suit are block quotes from the *Militant*’s coverage of the fight,” he said.

Of the 56 issues of the socialist paper that have come out since the start of the fight, 54 have had articles on the struggle at Co-Op, Sandler noted. “And the *Militant* is going to continue to cover this fight in the same way,” he said, “with the same accuracy, making no bones about its support for the miners in their fight for a union.”

Supporters of the *Militant* are taking this attack seriously. “It’s one thing to not be thrown off course by a suit like this,” Sandler said, “but it’s something else to take frivolously what you may face.” He announced the launching of the *Militant Fighting Fund* and asked for contributions to help cover the legal and other expenses that the *Militant* may face against the Kingston suit. The goal, he said, is to raise \$30,000 by December 15. Those present pledged or contributed more than \$23,000.

Hidden centrality of ‘union question’

“Before the results are in after the polls close on Tuesday evening the feverish diversions of this election campaign will rapidly fade away from human memory,” said Jack Barnes in opening his talk. The reason is that the elections didn’t address the most important questions facing humanity, he stated. Whoever wins the elections will



face a very different kind of economic and financial crisis before the end of his term than his predecessor did, the SWP leader said. Competition between U.S. imperialism and its European and Japanese rivals, deflationary pressures, and the danger of default on the foreign debt held by governments in semicolonial countries will drive the U.S. rulers and their government to try to squeeze even more out of workers and farmers.

In addressing what to do today in face of these conditions, the single most important question for working people is the need to organize unions and mobilize union power, and to build a labor party based on the unions that fights in the interests of workers and farmers.

This course, which was placed at the center of the Socialist Workers election campaign this fall, stands in sharp contrast to all the abstract promises, pleas, and plans that capitalist politicians offer, and that in the end reduce us to the dismal prospect of voting for “Anyone But...,” Barnes said.

The unions remain at center stage of politics in this country, said Barnes. “The battle to build these defense organizations of the working class has not been and will not be driven away” as working people resist the assaults by the employers and the effects of the economic devastation that are a consequence of capitalism.

Barnes said workers are confronted with a contradiction. On the one hand, the trade union movement continues to decline in size and strength. The course of the class-collaborationist labor officialdom more and more resembles that of corporations that carry out merger after merger to ensure their continued existence and the pensions of the executives.

On the other hand, trade unions will continue to be the potential instruments workers turn to as they seek to fight the employers’ offensive against their wages and conditions of life and work.

Their transformation’

Barnes noted that the most important change the U.S. capitalists are carrying out today is the transformation of their military in face of the challenges they face in defending their class interests around the globe. The reason this was not debated at all in the bourgeois election campaign is that there is no basic disagreement on this course among the U.S. rulers and their twin parties.

The U.S. rulers are reorganizing their armed forces into smaller, more lethal units that can be rapidly deployed around the world to defend Washington’s interests. They are eliminating the overseas military bases of the Cold War years, which were virtual cities with facilities for soldiers’ families. The “logistical support” on such bases is being “outsourced.” Instead, Washington

is moving to set up stripped-down “lily pads” in Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe—particularly near the Middle East and Central Asia, where the imperialist offensive, waged under the banner of the “war on terrorism,” is currently focused.

Uzbekistan, Romania, and São Tomé and Príncipe (in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea) are among the locations being considered for these new deployment points. Meanwhile, U.S. forces stationed at giant bases in Germany, south Korea, and Okinawa, Japan, will be sharply cut back as part of this restructuring. Bases that are unpopular locally, like the one in Seoul, Korea, are in the process of being moved to more remote areas.

This transformation of the U.S. military’s posture is being driven and accelerated by wars like those in Afghanistan and Iraq. The purpose of these wars is not to recolonize these countries and occupy them for the long haul with American troops but to work with sections of the local ruling classes to advance the strategic interests of U.S. imperialism.

At home, the SWP leader said, the U.S. rulers have established the Northern Command, the first time the U.S. military has command of security on U.S. soil since the end of the Civil War in 1865. Northcom is a war-fighting command that is responsible for “homeland defense,” which includes dealing with “civil disorders,” drug trafficking, and “terrorist” attacks on U.S. territory.

Working in coordination with Northcom, and also located at the Peterson Air Force Base near Colorado Springs, Colorado, is the North American Aerospace Defense Command (Norad), which can put the Canadian Air Force under its command. Norad has flown more than 38,000 sorties by fighter-bombers “in protection of the homeland” since Sept. 11, 2001, Barnes said.

“Homeland defense” also changes Washington’s approach to its own southern and northern frontiers. The model for the U.S. rulers is the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, where the border is defined by military necessity rather than the needs of sovereign nations in command of their territory, allowing Washington to move its forces quickly against its enemies in the region. This is the standard the U.S. government wants to set for its borders with Canada and Mexico.

The purpose of the wars the U.S. rulers launch is not only to safeguard their interests abroad, Barnes noted. Equally important, it is aimed at mobilizing patriotic sentiment at home—that is, getting working people to accept “sacrifice” in the name of “saving America” and “defeating terrorism.”

The SWP leader explained that it is important to assess U.S. imperialism’s accomplishments in the world over the recent period—to know our enemy. One such achievement is the transformation of the Pakistani government from a protector of the Taliban in Afghanistan into one of Washington’s strongest allies in the region.

‘Islamism’ has peaked

Barnes pointed to the preparations for a new U.S. military offensive in Iraq’s “Sunni Triangle,” an area where Saddam Hussein’s Baathist forces have had a base of support. Just as Washington and London were easily able to invade Iraq last year because of the Hussein regime’s incapacity to fight imperialism and the stranglehold it had imposed through its party-police state on working people of Iraq, the U.S. rulers have made advances in that country today because of the political nature of the forces involved in the opposition to the U.S.-led occupation.

“There is no revolutionary resistance in Iraq,” said Barnes, “although there are many brave young people in Iraq who are outraged by the occupation and the false promises” of the occupiers and their collaborators. Unlike the bourgeois-led militias, which have relied on methods such as beheading foreign hostages and bombing U.S. targets, a revolutionary movement against imperialist domination must offer a clear presentation of what it’s fighting for.

By way of contrast, he pointed to the **Continued on the following page**

SWP 2004 campaign

Continued from front page

and Craig, Colorado, the Twin Cities, Minnesota, and New York.

Both took part in an October 31 public meeting in New York titled "Before the Vote: The Real Results of the U.S. Election Campaign," which featured SWP national secretary Jack Barnes (see article on page 6).

Calero and Hawkins are now on their way to Canada and other countries to campaign for the revolutionary working-class perspective outlined in the SWP campaign platform. They plan to return to the United States and continue doing the same 365 days a year. The other 42 SWP candidates and their supporters are following suit (see editorial on page 10).

We publish below one of a number of articles we received on the Socialist Workers Party's wind-up election efforts. It's on Calero's visit to the picket line of cannery workers in Yakima, Washington.

❖

BY CONNIE ALLEN

YAKIMA, Washington—Joining a picket line of 50 striking cannery workers in Yakima October 24 was the highlight of a visit to this state by Róger Calero. He came here at the end of his U.S. campaign tour. Three carloads of campaign supporters joined Calero on the Snokist picket line. Workers here are members of the Western Council of Industrial Workers (WCIW). They have been on strike since September 23 (see article on page 4).

After Calero presented the SWP campaign platform, a number of workers asked questions. "Do you have a party in Yakima? Where is the party strongest?" asked one worker.

"The closest branch of the party is in Seattle," Calero said in response. "The Socialist Workers Party is strongest where we are part of resistance to the bosses' assaults. In the Midwest, for example, where meatpacking workers are organizing, we are on the ballot and campaigning in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska. We are on the ballot in every region of the country."

"You are talking about a revolution, but what kind? Do you mean a guerilla fight?" asked one of the strikers.

Calero said that a social revolution is needed. "It will be a revolution of millions of workers to take power out of the hands of the capitalists," he said. "Today this fight starts with strengthening our unions through struggles like yours, and organizing unions where they don't exist, like the Co-Op miners in Utah."

Discussing how to reach out to the community and convince others not to be used as strikebreakers, Calero explained how the Utah miners have reached out to the entire labor movement and community groups and the churches to ask for time to explain their struggle. "The bosses use unemployment to divide us," he said. "We have lost so much on how to effectively organize a strike. If we don't resist, fight back, they tear us apart."

One worker told Calero that the bosses had cut wages so much it wasn't worth it to work for them, and that when they threatened to shut down many workers responded, "Go ahead."

Calero said he agreed with this kind of response. "Any company that claims they can't pay decent wages and benefits doesn't deserve to be in business," he said. "And if they move some other place, we should tell them, 'You can run but you can't hide.' We need to collaborate with workers where they move and organize any place they go, here or in any other country."

Jennifer Smith, a high school student who had heard Calero and three strikers the night before at a campaign rally in Seattle, joined the caravan from Seattle to Yakima. The three strikers traveled to Seattle the previous night to a Socialist Workers campaign rally. Otilio Herrera from the WCIW brought greetings from the strikers and encouraged everyone to join them on the picket line in Yakima and to help reach out to others in the labor movement for support.

Smith said she appreciated the op-

portunity to talk to workers "who have exhausted the possibility of living with the bosses' attacks and are now fighting back. This is real." As a high school student, Smith said, "My experience is the history we are taught. We are told that questions like the right to a union have been solved, laws have been passed. To talk to these workers about companies like Snokist keeping workers as temporaries shows us the companies are always looking for ways to break the unions."

While in Yakima, Calero was interviewed by two local television stations and *El Sol*, a Spanish-language newspaper in the area.

N.Y. meeting: Real results of U.S. election

Continued from previous page

wealth of political debates on program and strategy conducted by genuine national liberation movements over the decades. These range from the National Liberation Front in Vietnam, which led the popular movement that defeated U.S. imperialism in Southeast Asia, to the revolutionary liberation movement in Algeria against French colonialism, to the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army in Cuba. Nor is there a bourgeois regime in the Mideast willing to risk organizing a nationalist resistance to the imperialist occupation, said Barnes. This marks the political exhaustion of the bourgeois nationalist and Stalinist forces that for decades substituted for revolutionary leadership in the region.

This includes the exhaustion of "Islamist" groups like Hamas or al-Qaeda. In fact, Barnes said, the 1979 takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by 500 insurgents, which the Saudi regime crushed after two weeks, "was the high point of 'Islamism,' while September 11 was its flare-out."

Because the imperialists can't solve the crisis bred by their own system and generate permanent instability, however, working people in the region will be able to make use of the political space opened up to seek ways to advance their struggles, Barnes said.

'Our transformation'

Pointing to the resistance by working people in the United States, Barnes said the experiences that militant workers and farmers are going through today are part of "our transformation." What class-conscious workers do now is critical for the big class battles of the future. We go through common experiences with other workers, who show a willingness to learn and change their views



Militant/Ted Leonard

SWP vice-presidential candidate Arrin Hawkins (left) visits UNITE Local 1226T members on strike against Duro Textiles in Fall River, Massachusetts, October 14, along with Laura Garza, SWP candidate for state representative in Suffolk County District 1.

Real results of U.S. election

on all kinds of questions as they fight.

Workers will learn, for example, that they are limited not primarily by the government's antiunion legislation, but by "what they themselves are big enough to take," Barnes said. That means relying on their own strength and capacities and reaching out to fellow working people.

A strong point of the SWP campaign, Barnes said, was when the party's presidential candidate, Róger Calero, began responding to workers complaining about how badly the bosses treat them by pointing out that when companies lay off workers or shut down plants and move production elsewhere, workers must follow the bosses wherever they go—even to Mexico or other countries. Past labor upsurges in the United States have shown that workers can defeat the bosses' tactics when union-organizing and other struggles become so generalized that bosses "can run but they can't hide."

It is to be part of this resistance that over the past few years socialist workers have organized to get jobs in coal mines, garment and textile factories, and meatpacking plants. These are industries where the bosses' brutal productivity drives have begun to generate resistance.

Class-conscious workers need to be mobile in order to have the flexibility to leave one job and get another one quickly as struggles develop. Key to this is acquiring the necessary job skills. Barnes pointed to the example of the New York SWP branch, where both the oldest and youngest members of the branch, 62 and 25 years of age, are in jobs learning butcher skills.

This example points to the need for communist workers of different generations to work together to make real progress.

Barnes said he wholeheartedly agreed with a comment by a Cuban revolutionary leader who was asked by a participant at a recent meeting in Washington, D.C., whether the leadership of the revolution was passing the torch to the younger generation. He replied that it's impossible to "pass the torch." Instead, the leadership transition is being carried out in Cuba through several different generations of cadres working together to carry out all the campaigns of the revolution, he emphasized.

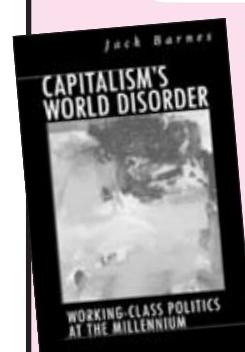
Likewise, the SWP leader said, integrating youth into the communist movement requires more than reading about and discussing what the movement stands for, however important that is. It has to be combined with systematic work to take revolutionary-minded young people to picket lines and other class-struggle actions, as well as involving them in regular sales of the *Militant* at factory gates or mine portals. This is crucial to get a sense of the potential power of working people and gain a better understanding that communism is not a set of ideas—which will seem hard to understand—but the generalization of the line of march of the working class.

Barnes ended by quoting from one of his favorite articles on the Socialist Workers campaign. It was a recent interview with vice-presidential candidate Arrin Hawkins in the *Louisiana Weekly*, a Black community paper published in New Orleans, during the socialist's visit to Tulane University.

Noting that Hawkins was "the only African-American woman running in the 2004 race," the interviewer wrote, "Poised and trim in a blue pinstriped suit and short cropped hair, she flashed an easy smile, behind which were some not-so-easy ideas."

Questions posed in the 2004 elections aren't new Lessons for the struggles of today and tomorrow

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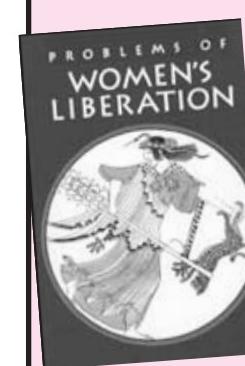
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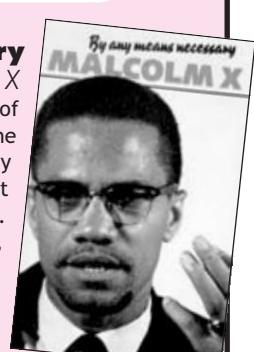
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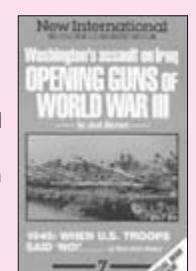
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Cosmetics, fashions, and exploitation of women

Below is an excerpt from *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for November. The title contains articles by Joseph Hansen and Evelyn Reed, long-time leaders of the Socialist Workers Party, that were part of a debate in the party over the relation of the marketing of cosmetics and fashions to the oppression of women. The book opens with an article by *Militant* editor Joseph Hansen using the pen name Jack Bustelo, entitled "Sagging Cosmetics Lines Try a Face Lift." It is an exposé of the ways in which the owners of big cosmet-



Typical cosmetics ad from 1950s glorifies bourgeois standards of beauty and illustrates how women's bodies are used in capitalist society to market products for profit.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

ics companies try to manipulate women's insecurities and fears to sell their products and rake in massive profits.

The article prompted a letter of protest to the editor, charging that Bustelo was ridiculing women and challenging the right of working-class women to strive for "some loveliness and beauty in their lives." Bustelo's response evoked further objections. The excerpt below is from a contribution to the debate by Bustelo

entitled "The Fetish of Cosmetics." Reed contributed articles in defense of Bustelo and a Marxist approach to the question of women's emancipation. The book is copyright © 1986 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



BY JACK BUSTELO

Lest anyone still doubt how directly the American capitalist class is involved in this question of beauty, let me quote the following words from a recently published book, *The Tastemakers*, written by one of them, Russell Lynes, managing editor of *Harper's* magazine:

"There are pressures on our tastes from all sides, pressures that even the most reluctant among us can scarcely ignore. The making of taste in America is, in fact, a major industry. Is there any other place you can think of where there are so many professionals telling so many nonprofessionals what their taste should be? Is there any country which has as many magazines as we have devoted to telling people how they should decorate their homes, clothe their bodies, and deport themselves in company? And so many newspaper columns full of hints about what is good taste and what is bad taste? In the last century and a

quarter the purveying of taste in America has become big business, employing hundreds of thousands of people in editorial and advertising offices, in printing plants, in galleries and museums, in shops and consultants' offices. If the taste industry were to go out of business we would have a major depression, and there would be headlines of tastemakers as far as the eye could see."

That strikes me as pretty plain speaking about the source of one of the pressures bearing down on us. However, Lynes puts it still more baldly in the very next paragraph:

"This is not, however, a catastrophe we are likely to encounter, because the taste industry has gradually become essential to the operation of our American brand of capitalism. It is in the nature of our economic system not merely to meet demand but to create it. One of the ways that demand is created is by changing people's tastes, or at least inviting them to change, and by making the pressures to give up what seemed good yesterday for what should seem inviting today so strong that they are almost impossible to resist."

How difficult the pressures are to resist we may judge from cases of good revolutionists who succumbed to the prosperity that has endured since the outbreak of

World War II. Some of them did it silently, without seeking to find a political difference as excuse or rationalization. The lure of a ranch house in the suburbs with a picture window as laid out in the lush colors of *Better Homes and Gardens* proved impossible to resist. The overwhelming pressure has a name; it is "bourgeois." The proletarian became "bourgeoisified." In other words, he gave up thinking and became an addict of the opium of commodity fetishism.

Lynes describes the days we live in as the days of "the corporate taste." "The corporation has, in fact," he says, "become one of the most powerful and conscientious (does he mean 'conscious'?) art patrons of our day, and has established itself not only as a purveyor of tasteful objects but as an arbiter of taste as well." He even dates the beginning of "the corporate taste": "It was inevitable that sooner or later business, in its efforts to reestablish itself in the confidence of the public would embrace culture. And this it began to do in earnest in the early 1940s while the war was on."

The imperialist war thus had its reflection in the development of an imperialist taste in culture in America.

"If we are to understand this influence of the corporation on the taste of our time, there are three ways in which the corporation must be looked at—as a consumer of the arts, in its role as patron; as a purveyor of the arts, in its role as the manufacturer or dispenser of the objects with which we surround ourselves; and finally as a new kind of society in which taste has a new kind of significance." This managing editor of an influential bourgeois magazine obviously knows what it is all about. He even admits that the motive of the corporations in the field of culture "no matter how indirectly expressed, has been profit."

He cites examples of forays in this field by such corporations as Dole Pineapple, Capehart Phonograph-Radio, the Container Corporation of America, Standard Oil of New Jersey, the Pepsi-Cola Company, and Corning Glass. And he explains in some detail what the calculations of these patrons of the beautiful are:

"To a great many manufacturers the problem is not how to improve taste but how to keep it fluid so that what looked new and attractive last year will seem old-fashioned this year and downright archaic ten years from now."

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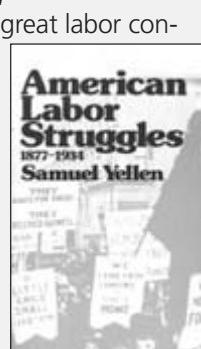
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“Prisoners in the Arkansas Department of Correction system aren’t getting flu vaccinations this year.”



Department spokeswoman Dina Tyler said prisoners at high risk of flu complications, such as 65 or over or

those with medical conditions, normally get flu shots. But this year’s shortage left the department with no vaccine.”—News item.

How much is prison labor wage?—Next year, Arkansas state prison inmates will have to pay \$3 each time they request medical care. The fee is intended to discourage frivolous medical complaints.—Associated Press.

Marvel of free enterprise—Combining tourism and health care, a ferry running between Seat-

tle and British Columbia, Canada, has drawn hundreds of passengers for a round trip and a Canadian flu shot. Round trip, \$105.

Next, rent-a-chair on assembly lines?—High up in New York’s Empire State Building, stressed-out professionals can take a 20-minute “power nap” in plush napping chairs. And, in the Big Apple, the \$14 nap fee seems almost reasonable.

How shrewd—The United Kingdom’s prime minister, An-

THONY Blair, is crafting planks for a program aimed at winning a third term in office. Meanwhile, the chairperson of the pensions commission advised that nearly 12 million people aren’t saving enough for their old age. He added that in three decades, pensions would be slashed 30 percent unless people saved more money and worked longer. All of this, government ministers said, would be laid out after the general election.

Backward march!—“Workers may get right to stay after 65”—

Headline, *The Times*. London.

Why so many people love imperialism—“U.S. Territory: U.S. Virgin Islands—More than 3,000 U.S. Virgin Islanders are suing the U.S. Department of Agriculture for allegedly unfairly [?] denying them agricultural loans. The \$2.8 billion law suit claims the government either failed to provide them with application forms or refused to give them information needed to properly fill them out, said Douglas Inman, a lawyer representing the plaintiffs.”—USA Today.

Quest for development spurs demand for new nuclear reactors

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

The use of nuclear power to generate energy is expanding across the globe. Nations around the world, “from China to Finland and the United States, are gearing up to build new reactors as demand for electricity grows,” said an article in the October 18 *International Herald Tribune*.

According to the World Nuclear Association (WNA), as of 2004 there were 437 nuclear power plants operating worldwide, as well as 30 under construction and 32 on order or planned. Of those under construction, half are in semicolonial countries in Asia, largely India (30 percent), China (7 percent), and south Korea (3 percent); a fifth are in Russia; and one-tenth are elsewhere in Eastern or Central Europe. Of those on order or planned, 27 percent are in south Korea, 13 percent in China, and 6 percent in Latin America (Argentina and Brazil).

Nuclear power reactors operate in 31 countries and produce 360,000 megawatts of power. Nuclear power’s share in total world electricity output more than doubled from 8 percent in 1979 to above 16 percent in 1987, remaining roughly at that level ever since. The World Nuclear Association estimates that coal provides 40 percent of the planet’s electricity, natural gas 15 percent, oil 10 percent, and hydropower and other sources 19 percent.

Semicolonial countries—from India to Iran and Brazil—and workers states like China are trying to push for economic development, which requires expanding electrification. At the same time, oil and natural gas prices continue to go up. So a range of governments are increasingly turning to nuclear power as an alternative energy source. A report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released in May forecasted that nuclear energy generation will rise 2.5 times by 2030, to 27 percent of global electricity output. “Most of the projected growth in nuclear power [is] taking place in the developing world,” said the *Herald Tribune*.

The differences in the use of nuclear energy, however, are vast between the imperialist countries and the semicolonial world. Access to nuclear technology in the countries where it is most needed is being increasingly restricted by Washington and

its imperialist allies through the use of the IAEA under the banner of “non-proliferation.” At the same time the demand for sources of energy in the semicolonial world continues to increase.

One-third of the world’s population—some 2 billion people—have no access to modern forms of energy and are forced to rely on candles or kerosene lamps for lighting and wood, dung, thatch, and straw for fuel. The bulk of them live in semicolonial nations, where, according to World Bank figures, some 20 percent of the world’s population survives on less than \$1 a day.

The only parts of the world that come close to universal electrification, these statistics reveal, are the imperialist countries of North America, Western Europe, and Asia and the Pacific—that is, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia—as well as the workers states of Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union (including the Central Asian republics) and Cuba.

More than 75 percent of the earth’s people, who live in the semicolonial world, have little or no access to nuclear power, which produces the greatest amount of energy with the least use of resources and smallest output of atmospheric pollution. Among the planet’s 138 semicolonial nations, only eight—Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, and Pakistan—have nuclear power plants today or are proposing to build nuclear reactors.

The 23 imperialist countries, on the other hand, which seek to maintain a monopoly on nuclear energy, comprise 14 percent of the world’s population and consume 60 percent of the electricity. Under the banner of halting the “proliferation of weapons of mass destruction” and preventing “atomic terrorism,” Washington and its imperialist allies have pressed to restrict efforts in the colonial world to expand electrification through the use of nuclear power.

The Far East is projected to lead worldwide growth of nuclear energy, more than doubling energy output from nuclear power plants in the next two decades. Some 30 reactors are under construction worldwide, with at least 18 of them in Asia. China is leading the way with plans to add 32 nuclear power plants to its existing 11 in the next 15 years. And India, currently with 14 nuclear power plants, reportedly plans to triple its reactor capacity in eight years.

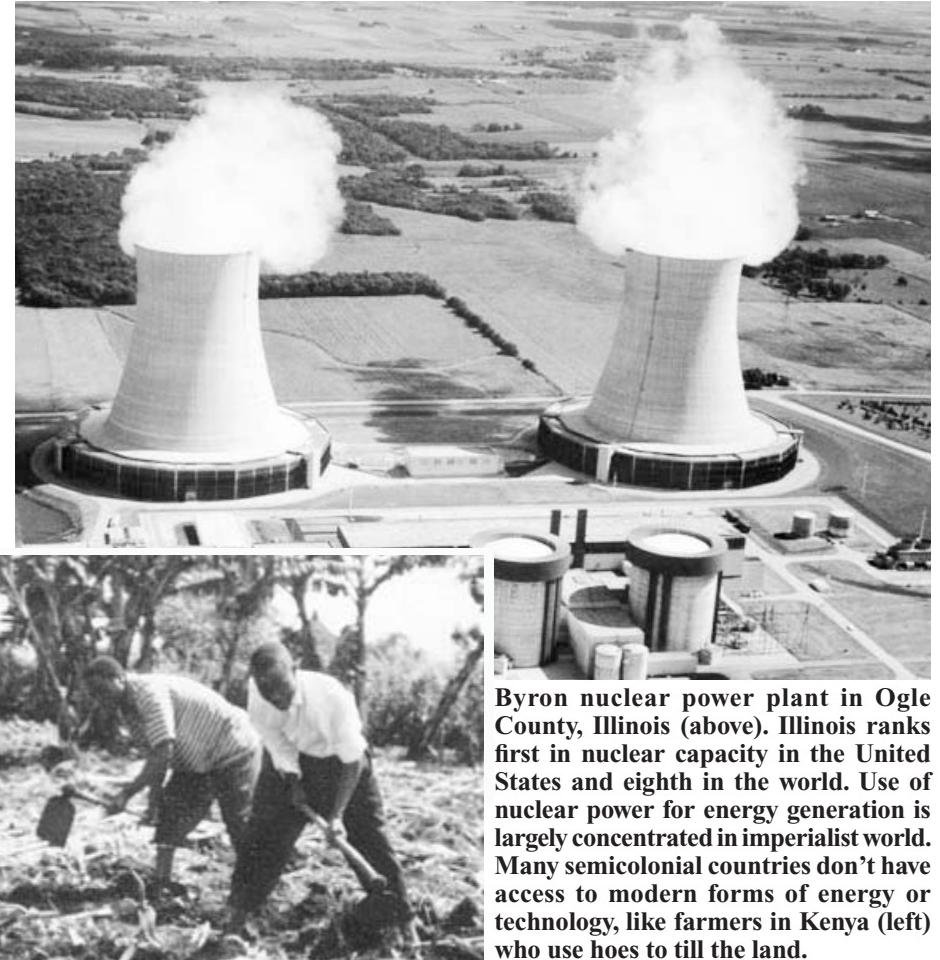
The first new plant to be commissioned in western Europe since 1999 will be in Finland.

Japan, which has 54 nuclear power reactors; south Korea, 19; Ukraine, 14; Romania, 1; and Argentina with 2 reactors, also have indicated plans to increase nuclear energy capacity, the *Herald Tribune* reported.

According to a report released by the World Nuclear Association in 2002, total world energy use increased by 50 percent since 1980. “Increased demand was most dramatic in developing countries,” the report stated. In the semicolonial nations energy demand is projected to rise by more than 2 percent per year, or by 57 percent between 1997 and 2020.

Nuclear power provides almost 25 percent of the electrical power in the imperialist world. One of the biggest per capita users of nuclear energy, France, is planning to build another plant. With 59 nuclear plants, Paris relies on atomic energy to produce nearly 80 percent of its electrical power.

In the United States, 103 nuclear plants produce the largest absolute amount of nuclear power in the world. These generate nearly 20 percent of the electricity in the



Byron nuclear power plant in Ogle County, Illinois (above). Illinois ranks first in nuclear capacity in the United States and eighth in the world. Use of nuclear power for energy generation is largely concentrated in imperialist world. Many semicolonial countries don’t have access to modern forms of energy or technology, like farmers in Kenya (left) who use hoes to till the land.

country. Some 26 plants have received 20-year extensions of their operating licenses and 18 others have applied for extensions. The Westinghouse Corporation received approval September 13 from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for a new plant. Three other companies have requested approval from the commission for new sites to build reactors in the future.

“We are positioning ourselves for the fact that over the next decade our country will need a lot more electricity,” said Steve Kerekes, spokesman for the Nuclear Energy Institute. Kerekes said the U.S. nuclear energy industry plans to increase its share of

electricity generation from 20 percent to 24 percent in the next 15 years.

No new reactor has been built in the United States since 1979 when a partial meltdown occurred in the nuclear facility at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania.

Nuclear technology was first developed in the 1940s, as a byproduct of military research by the U.S. government aimed at producing powerful bombs by splitting the atoms of uranium or plutonium. The first nuclear power reactor to be used for generating electricity began operation in 1954 at Obninsk, Russia, 60 miles south of Moscow.

Pro-imperialist opposition set back in Venezuela’s regional elections

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

The pro-imperialist opposition in Venezuela lost further ground in regional elections held October 31. Initial results showed that candidates of the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR), the party of President Hugo Chávez, and their allies swept 21 of the country’s 23 governorships. Prior to this election, politicians allied with the opposition coalition Coordinadora Democrática ran nine states.

As this issue goes to press, electoral authorities had confirmed the election of 18 MVR-backed governors and 2 for the opposition—in the western state of Zulia and Nueva Esparta, the island of Margarita. The result includes the defeat of Enrique Mendoza, one of the most prominent politicians of the U.S.-backed opposition, who was governor of the state of Miranda, adjacent to the federal district of Caracas, the country’s capital.

In two other states—Yaracuy and Carabobo, ruled until now by pro-imperialist governors Eduardo Lapi and Henrique Salas, respectively—the incumbents refused to concede defeat as the initial counts showed they both lost by small

margins to MVR-endorsed candidates. Lapi accused the Chávez administration of trying to carry out a coup in Yaracuy. The government deployed troops in both states and the National Electoral Council assumed responsibility for determining the final tally.

The election of a governor in a 23rd state, Amazonas, now run by the MVR, was delayed until January.

MVR’s candidate Juan Barreto was also elected metropolitan mayor of Caracas, defeating Alfredo Peña, a major figure in the Coordinadora Democrática opposition coalition. Pro-government mayors were elected in more than 250 of the country’s 337 municipalities, according to Reuters.

The results are a further blow to the opposition coalition, which lost by a wide margin in August in its effort to unseat the Chávez administration through a presidential recall referendum. That was the third failed attempt by Coordinadora Democrática to remove the elected government. The first two, a U.S.-backed military coup in 2002 and a bosses’ “strike” in 2003 were defeated after massive mobilizations of working people that divided the military.

New Issue Coming in December

New International no. 13

OUR POLITICS START WITH THE WORLD

by Jack Barnes

“Our job is to make a revolution in the country where we live and work. To do so we must understand—and understand thoroughly—politics and the class struggle within those national boundaries. But we can do that only as part of an international class that has no homeland—the working class. As part of an international alliance with exploited and oppressed toilers throughout the world. That’s not a slogan. That’s not the result of an act of will. It is the class reality of life in the imperialist epoch.”

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Join us in campaigning for socialism

The Socialist Workers Party fielded 44 candidates in 22 states and the District of Columbia in the 2004 election, including its presidential slate of Róger Calero and Arrin Hawkins. They presented a working-class alternative to the parties of capitalism—not only the Democrats and Republicans, but the Greens, Libertarians, and “independent” Nader/Camejo campaign, all of which promoted the patriotic, anti-working class framework of “America First.”

After the elections, supporters of the SWP campaign are fighting for the same program, which grows out of the struggles of workers and farmers to confront the effects of the bipartisan offensive by the bosses on our wages and working conditions.

There were no differences on the fundamentals between the major capitalist candidates. The twin parties of the ruling class agreed on continuing to push down wages, stretch out the workday, speed up the production line, and further weaken the unions to shore up the bosses’ declining profit rates.

Both Democrats and Republicans agreed on the ongoing transformation of Washington’s global military posture and the pursuit of the imperialist “war on terrorism.”

These remain the U.S. rulers’ main answers to intensified interimperialist competition and the opening stages of a world economic depression, as well as the fact that they lost the Cold War.

The standard of living of the working class has deteriorated over the last 30 years and will continue to decline. The rulers can’t give the real reason for this: the normal workings of the capitalist system, with its dog-eat-dog morality, and the tiny handful of billionaire families that perpetuate their rule at the expense of the vast majority. The employers and their government—whether headed by Democrats or Republicans—will increasingly use the war in Iraq, and other wars to come, to build a patriotic mobilization around their need to convince us to tighten our belts for “common sacrifice.”

In face of this, Calero, Hawkins, and the other SWP candidates joined workers and farmers in struggle and discussed with them the need to stop looking at ourselves as objects, as the victims of the bosses, but instead to discover our own self-worth.

When some workers said that it’s more difficult to fight now because the government uses bankruptcy courts to tear up union contracts and slash wages and benefits—pointing to the owners of the largest U.S. airlines or the Horizon coal mines—Calero and Hawkins joined the issue. The SWP candidates responded that no judge ever ordered workers in these companies to give back wages. The boss does that. The court, whose job it is to preserve the capital of the ruling families, goes along. The answer workers need to give to Delta, US Airways, or other employers, when

they say they need cutbacks to survive, is simple: walk out. And if the bosses threaten to shut down, tell them that any company that can’t afford decent wages and benefits does not deserve to be in business. When some employers do fold up tent and move, follow them everywhere—even abroad—and collaborate with workers wherever they go to organize a union and fight the bosses wherever they are.

A growing number of workers—from the Co-Op miners in Utah to cannery workers in Yakima—are beginning to draw such conclusions and act accordingly, the SWP candidates pointed out, based on their experiences on the campaign trail. These struggles are not episodic. Through them, a number of militant workers become seasoned cadre who will be indispensable when more decisive battles come.

It’s out of the generalization of such working-class struggles in the United States and around the world—now and in the past—that the SWP campaign platform was crafted. Socialist Workers candidates championed the need of workers to organize unions and mobilize union power to fight the bosses’ attacks effectively. Out of these fights, they said, the need also grows to build a labor party, based on the unions, that fights in the interests of workers and farmers worldwide. This is needed so that workers can have an instrument to fight, not only on the economic level, but on the political plane, too, to take state power out of the hands of the exploiters.

Socialist Workers candidates also called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. and other imperialist troops from Iraq, as well as Afghanistan, the Balkans, Colombia, Korea, and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. And they promoted the right of semicolonial countries to acquire the sources of energy they need, including nuclear energy, for economic development, which is a prerequisite for political and economic advances for working people in the colonial world. They exposed the hypocritical campaign under the banner of “nonproliferation” of Washington—the only government in the world to have used the atomic bomb—and its imperialist allies to prevent countries like Brazil, Iran, and north Korea from developing nuclear power.

SWP campaign supporters are continuing to stand and fight for this working-class revolutionary perspective after the elections, and they do so 365 days a year. We urge you to join with them in campaigning for socialism with the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder books at plant gates, picket lines, working-class neighborhoods, and social protest actions. What they offer is knowledge about, involvement in, and emulation of struggles in the United States and around the world through which workers can take what they are big enough to take. For information on how to contact us, see the directory on page 8.

Israeli parliament OKs Gaza pullout

Continued from Page 4

told the Israeli daily *Haaretz* that Sharon’s plan for Gaza is “formaldehyde...so there will be no political process with the Palestinians.”

Tel Aviv’s initiative around a pullout from Gaza has been accompanied by a step up in its brutalization of the Palestinian population there. *Haaretz* as well as Palestinian organizations report that Israeli forces killed more than 150 Palestinians in October, the largest number in a single month since April 2002. The overwhelming majority of these were killed in Gaza, largely during the occupation of the northern part of the territory.

At the same time, Tel Aviv has continued to make progress in building a wall around and into the West Bank. The more than 400-mile “security wall” will secure a substantial land grab for the Israeli rulers by redrawing the map of the territory that is home to nearly 2 million Palestinians. It is a central feature of what the

Israeli and U.S. imperialist rulers term the “two-state solution,” a set-up they will try to impose on the Palestinian population on Tel Aviv and Washington’s terms.

Israel and the Arab Revolution

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Pyongyang protests ‘war games’ off its shores

BY SAM MANUEL

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) sent a message to the United Nations formally protesting U.S.-led naval exercises in Japan’s Tokyo Bay. A commentary carried by the Korean Central News Agency called the naval maneuvers “a reckless preliminary war against the DPRK.” In a letter to UN General Secretary Kofi Annan, DPRK’s ambassador to the UN Park Gil-yon said the exercise “constitutes a breach of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and order, and is a dangerous act that could entail global instability,” according to a report in the *Korea Times*.

The DPRK diplomat also warned that participation in the exercises by governments that are also involved in six-party talks on Pyongyang’s nuclear programs would “create an obstacle” to any meaningful negotiations. The governments of China and south Korea—which are parties to these negotiations along with Moscow, Tokyo, and Washington—declined to participate in the war games.

The naval exercise, dubbed “Team Samurai,” started October 26 and lasted for three days. They were led by Washington and included warships from Australia, France,

and Japan. They are part of the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), under which Washington and its imperialist allies assert the right to stop, board, and confiscate the cargo of any ships they decide are suspect of carrying “weapons of mass destruction” or materials that could be used for their production.

U.S. undersecretary of state John Bolton personally reviewed the maneuvers from the deck of a Japanese Coast Guard vessel. “We are sending a signal to everybody who wants to traffic weapons of mass destruction that we have zero tolerance for that,” Bolton said. He also charged that north Korea, Iran and Syria are “the world’s foremost proliferators of ballistic missiles and related technology to rogue states.”

At the end of September, the U.S. Navy deployed state-of-the-art Aegis destroyers in the Sea of Japan off the waters of north Korea. The ships, part of the Navy’s Seventh Fleet, are also part of an elaborate network of sea-based missiles, and land-based Patriot missiles, that make up the so-called missile defense shield. The system is designed to intercept ballistic missiles from adversaries, thus giving Washington and its imperialist allies first-strike nuclear capacity.

Are industrial workers becoming irrelevant?

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Is it true that the working class in Europe and the United States is getting smaller, as bourgeois economists and professors often claim? What’s the difference between “productive” and “unproductive” workers? asks Ernesto Oleinik from Stockholm in a letter to the editor that appeared in the October 26 *Militant*. “Are only those workers that produce surplus value ‘productive’?”

The questions are welcome.

The working class is made up of those of us who are basically propertyless and who sell our labor power to a boss in exchange for wages—an income that on average equals our means of subsistence. In the United States, Sweden, and other imperialist countries the working class is the overwhelming majority of the population—from meat packers to farm laborers to casino workers (like the 10,000 who are on strike today in Atlantic City, New Jersey).

In contrast, the capitalist class is the tiny handful of billionaire families who own the factories, mines, most of the land, and other means of production. The middle classes are made up mostly of professionals and small and medium businesspeople. Working farmers are small

REPLY TO A READER

property owners, but are exploited producers and an ally of workers.

Despite the self-serving “theories” of bourgeois “experts,” it’s not true that the working class is dwindling. To the contrary, as Jack Barnes, the national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, explains in *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*, since World War II there has been “a massive increase in the size of the American working class, both in absolute terms and in relation to other classes.” Our ranks continue to be swelled by the workings of capitalism and imperialism, which drive farmers off the land—especially in semicolonial countries—and into the cities. This process has fueled immigration into all the imperialist countries.

“Productive” is not a scientific term. Most workers, not just factory workers, have socially useful jobs. The one truly unproductive class is the bourgeoisie.

Industrial workers include factory workers, miners, transportation workers, and others involved in industrial production. Through our labor, we add value to raw materials and unfinished goods. The capitalist pays us a portion of that value in wages. The rest of the wealth that we produce is surplus value—which the boss pockets as profit, as Karl Marx, one of the founders of scientific socialism, explains in *Wage Labor and Capital*. Workers not directly involved in production receive wages, paid by the capitalist from the pool of surplus value produced by our class.

Industrial workers have always been a minority of the working class. In the imperialist countries, the number of service and clerical workers has sharply increased since World War II, and the relative size of the industrial working class has declined. At the end of the 1960s almost 29 percent of U.S. workers had factory jobs; today, 18 percent.

Since 1969, the number of manufacturing jobs in the United States has fallen by 2 million—in large part because of speedup and automation. But the overall number of workers in the labor force has increased by 46 million. According to a September report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. labor force is 147.5 million—one of the largest working classes in the world.

The labor power in industries producing raw materials and manufacturing semifinished products or goods ready for the market—as well as in transportation, construction, and agriculture—is the main source of surplus value. Without these industries the entire economy stops, Barnes notes. In fact, the labor power of industrial workers and the surplus value we create is the source of the international power of the U.S. economy, the source of the American capitalists’ exports of goods and capital.

This is why “the industrial workers who are a minority of the American working class, have such fundamental strength, such potential power” well beyond their relative numerical size, Barnes explains. “This also demonstrates the fakery of numerous academic theories about the ‘post-industrial society’ and the ‘service-based economy.’” These “theories” that industrial workers and even the working class are disappearing—and thus becoming irrelevant—are simply rationalizations for accepting the capitalist status quo. And for refusing to join workers on the production line who are resisting the bosses’ offensive and are offering hope for humanity in doing so.

Because industrial workers are the source of most of the rulers’ surplus value, they are “the ultimate enemy that the rulers must defeat if the entire economic and social crisis of their system is to be turned around,” Barnes points out. Today, one aspect of the bosses’ assault is their use of bankruptcies to undermine the unions and squeeze more out of the hides of workers at coal mines, the largest U.S. airlines, and other industries.

Nonetheless, the social character of the industrial workplace, the large concentration of workers, and the extremely high division of labor are factors that give workers in industry an awareness of their collective power. Union-organizing battles like the one by the Co-Op miners in Utah, the farm workers’ fight for a union contract in North Carolina, and others are examples of the resistance bubbling throughout the country. To reverse their declining profit rates, the rulers will have to take on and defeat the industrial workers. The decisive battles, however, lie ahead.

Colorado cuts funds for prenatal care for immigrant workers

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The state government of Colorado has targeted undocumented workers for a cutoff from Medicaid funding for prenatal care. Colorado's Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), the state's Medicaid agency, adopted a rule change in September that ends its "presumptive eligibility" policy. This policy allowed any pregnant woman to receive prenatal care while her eligibility for state

funding was reviewed.

The situation "had gotten out of control," Karen Reinertson, HCPF executive director, told the *Wall Street Journal*. "The federal government has made clear that it doesn't want people coming to this country to receive benefits."

Although the state authorities claim the rule change is aimed at cutting down the number of "illegal" immigrants who receive basic health coverage, it is also a blow to working people who are documented residents and citizens. All applicants for Medicaid-funded prenatal care will now have to first apply for benefits. This process can take weeks, the *Rocky Mountain News* reported in an August 12 article titled, "Prenatal care for thousands on the line."

As many as two-thirds of the 19,000 women who received the free medical attention in Colorado last year are estimated to have been legal residents or citizens. The "presumptive eligibility" policy made it possible for all applicants to receive up to four months of medical attention, when abnormalities in the mother and fetus are usually detected.

Colorado's HCPF has cut millions of



Clinic in Los Angeles that provides prenatal care. Thousands of immigrant workers will be cut off from access to this care in Colorado under new state rules.

dollars in services over the past few years in the name of "balancing the budget," and has one of the most restrictive Medicaid programs in the country. State governments determine eligibility for their residents, and the federal government reimburses them for a percentage of their expenditures. Federal law prohibits undocumented workers from receiving Medicaid except in case of emergency. States may provide funding for prenatal care at their discretion, however, as well as some limited federal public health grants.

In Arizona a referendum passed November 2 that cuts off all public services

to undocumented workers. The measure also makes it a misdemeanor for government employees there to fail to report those who apply for services.

Some attacks on immigrants' ability to receive medical treatment have failed. Protests forced the federal government to back off from a plan to require hospitals to ask emergency room patients their immigration status, for example. And partisans of an initiative in California similar to Arizona's failed to gain the necessary support for ballot status. California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger recently restored funding for prenatal care that he had previously cut.

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UNITED KINGDOM

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The real result of the U.S. presidential election campaign. Speaker: Jonathan Silberman, Communist League; Sat., Nov. 13. Dinner 6:30 p.m., Program 7:30 p.m. 47 The Cut, London SE1 8LF, (Tube: Waterloo and Southwark). Tel: 020-7261-1354.

FLORIDA

Tampa

U.S., Puerto Rico: the continuing fight against colonial domination. Speaker: Nicole Sarmiento, SWP 2004 candidate for Senate; Sat. Nov. 6. Dinner 6:30 p.m., program 7:30 p.m., Donation: Program \$5, Dinner \$5. 1441 E. Fletcher at 15th St. (La Place Shopping Center, 2nd floor, rear). Tel: 813-910-8507.

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Imperialist troops out of Iraq! Fri., Nov. 12. Dinner 7 p.m., program 8 p.m. Donation: \$5 dinner, \$5 program. 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor. Tel: 212-629-6649.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The real results of the 2004 U.S. election campaign. Speaker: John Hawkins, SWP 2004 candidate for Washington, D.C., City Council at-Large; Sat., Nov. 6, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 3717-B Georgia Ave., NW (Georgia and New Hampshire avenues). Tel: 202-722-1315.

Meat packers in Illinois lose union vote

BY RAQUEL WILCOX

CHICAGO—According to the National Labor Relations Board, packinghouse workers at Stampede Meat lost an August 27 union representation election. The NLRB said the vote was 201-112 against the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW).

Most of the 300 workers are in the Bridgeview, Illinois, plant with a few dozen in a plant in Oaklawn, Illinois. The big majority are from Mexico. A significant minority is from Poland. Among the small number of U.S.-born workers most are Black.

The organizing drive lasted about six months. It began after some workers at Bridgeview called UFCW Local 1546 to ask for help in bringing in the union. This came after groups of workers tried to meet with management on several occasions to clear up grievances. Each time nothing was resolved.

The final incident came in March, after Stampede bosses arbitrarily changed the daily schedule of breaks. During several breaks, between 20 to 30 workers at a time went to the Human Resources office to complain. The next day, after getting no response from the company, many workers protested the new break schedule by

continuing to go by the old schedule.

More than 100 workers attended the first meeting called by the UFCW. A small in-plant organizing committee was set up. Within weeks many had signed authorization cards for a union election.

After the union filed for an election, the bosses began a fierce "Vote No!" campaign, including company-employee meetings, post ups, videos, and handouts. In a clear threat, especially to undocumented immigrant workers, Edward Ligas, Stampede's president, stated the company would give workers' names, addresses, and social security numbers to "appropriate government agencies, including unemployment." In addition, in July the company gave everyone a 35-cent hourly wage increase, more than the usual bi-yearly 15 cents raise. Many temporary workers were also brought into the plant just before the union election.

A number of union stalwarts said they and UFCW organizers tried to answer the company propaganda with their own leaflets, meetings, and individual discussions.

Some workers said the union campaign was not effective enough because it didn't succeed in overcoming divisions fostered by the bosses. "We needed to do more to explain that all of us workers have common

interests with our fellow workers against those of the bosses," said one worker, who asked that her name not be used.

UFCW officials said they will work with union backers inside the plant to organize another union election in a year, the time mandated by the NLRB before a new vote can take place.

"I think people are going to want the union back in less than a year because of the way they are treating us," said one member of the in-plant organizing committee. "There are already people who regret they voted no."

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LETTERS

Enjoy reading 'Militant'

I'm writing to let you know that I enjoy reading the *Militant*. Please continue sending it to me. It's a great paper. It's a blessing to receive it. It comes in handy in this lock-down cell with nothing good to read. I've been locked up 22 years and any material like this sure comes in handy.

A prisoner
Florence, Colorado

Iraq's 'Sunni Triangle'

I wanted to raise a small point concerning the article that appeared in the November 2 issue, "Fallujah: Iraqi government warns militias, as U.S. forces pound them."

I think the *Militant* should be careful about using the term "Sunni Triangle" as if that were the recognized label for a specific geographic area of Iraq. In fact, the term appears to have been coined by the so-called weapons inspectors of Iraq in the period before the

2003 invasion, to refer to the area composed predominantly of Sunni Muslims that the Saddam Hussein regime sought to build into a base of support.

As with all such terms coined by imperialist representatives, it reflects a certain view of the "troublesome natives," with pejorative connotations to it. Class-conscious workers should avoid such terms.

If the *Militant* does use the term, it should be put in quotes.

Mike Taber
Newark, New Jersey

U.S. food sales to Cuba

A reader might get the impression from Sam Manuel's article "Food sales to Cuba from U.S. companies rise" in the October 19 *Militant* that Cuba's economic situation is particularly good: food imports are up, tourism is up, the latest U.S. measures against the country are unenforceable.

I believe the opposite to be true,

that Cuba is living through a difficult period.

Cuba's food imports have not created an increase in the food supply. At best, the imports are simply making up for food shortages that have been created by a long drought in the eastern half of the country, as well as by other factors such as Hurricane Charley. One indication of these shortages is an increase in food prices—some of them quite sharp—not only for imported foodstuffs that are sold in dollars, but also for Cuban products such as rice and ham, sold in Cuban pesos. There has also been a rise in prices for fresh fruits and vegetables. Some prices, such as cheese, have quadrupled.

On a related point, Manuel quotes a newspaper called the *Sun Sentinel* as doubting that new U.S. restrictions on travel to Cuba by Cuban-Americans can be effectively enforced. I think this is wrong. The hundreds or thousands of Cuban-Americans who crowded the Miami

airport at the end of June, desperate to get to Cuba legally while it was still possible, obviously didn't think the U.S. government would be unable to enforce the new restrictions.

The big majority of remittances (dollars sent to Cuba) are carried by individual travelers, practically all of them Cuban-Americans. Nearly all Cuban-Americans who travel to Cuba go on charter flights from Miami, New York, or Los Angeles, directly to Havana. Access to these flights is strictly controlled by the U.S. government and limited to individuals who can prove they are traveling legally, that is, with the permission of the U.S. government. The burden of proof is on the traveler.

It will be impossible for anyone visiting family members to use this flight more than once every three years. While it is possible to travel to Cuba other ways, this would be illegal and it is unlikely that many people will choose to break the law.

With less travel, there will be fewer dollars transferred.

Arnold Weissberg
Havana, Cuba

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

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New Zealand

Marchers back Maori land rights

BY JANET ROTH

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—"Justice for Maori!" rang out from the sound truck as several thousand people marched October 16 from the central city along the waterfront. The marchers protested a proposed new law denying Maori control over areas of coastal lands.

The Labour government introduced the Foreshore and Seabed Bill into parliament in April. It would strip Maori of their right to file claims in court registering customary rights to sections of the foreshore and seabed, while leaving untouched the one-third of such areas currently under private ownership. The foreshore is defined as the part of beach between the high and low water marks.

"We're here to show that the last *hikoi* wasn't a fluke. It was a reality—the issue won't go away," said Te Ohu Mokai Wi Kingi. Earlier this year, thousands rallied in towns and cities to greet the *hikoi*, or national march, as it traveled down the North Island, culminating May 5 in a rally of 20,000 people outside parliament.

Wi Kingi, a former timber worker and unionist, came with others from Rotorua. Marchers hailed from Northland, Wellington, Hamilton, and elsewhere, as well as Auckland itself. James Seetai and Bismark Salatielu, both 17, had come with a group of 12 from their Auckland high school.

Led by a group outfitted with traditional warrior clothing and weapons, the *hikoi* took four hours to reach its rallying point

near Bastion Point, the site of a historic land protest in the late 1970s. A number of boats accompanied it, including two *waka*, or Maori canoes.

Efforts to regain land and prevent ongoing theft have been at the center of the struggle by Maori for their national rights for 160 years. About 15 percent of New Zealand's 4 million people are Maori, the country's indigenous people.

The government's new law is a response to a Court of Appeals decision allowing Maori in the Nelson-Marlborough area to present claims to the Maori Land Court for freehold title to areas of the foreshore and seabed. The decision recognized that Maori customary rights had never been legally extinguished.

Eight Maori tribes had appealed to the court because local authorities had repeatedly turned down their application for licenses to set up fish and shellfish farms.

The proposed legislation would prevent Maori from applying for such licenses to the courts, instead placing these areas of foreshore and seabed under government ownership. "We totally reject this legislation," said Harry Mikaere, a mussel farmer from the Hauraki district. "We are denied due process that other private landowners get. It's legitimizing the ongoing theft of Maori land."

A select committee of parliament has been taking public testimony on the bill. In a typical submission, Hauraki's Maori Trust Board underlined the importance



Militant/Michael Tucker

Thousands marched October 16 in Auckland, New Zealand, against the Foreshore and Seabed Bill, which denies Maori the right to file court claims for these coastal areas.

of foreshore rights by explaining that its people were among the most landless in the North Island, with only 2.6 percent of dry land remaining in their hands.

Joe Slade, one of the *hikoi*'s organizers, had attended the government hearings in Auckland. Highlighting the slanted nature of the hearings, Slade, who is a truck driver, said at an October 8 Militant Labor Forum here that private port companies

were the only ones whose concerns were addressed. The government has indicated that when the law is returned to parliament it may introduce amendments to allow these companies longer leases and security of investments in reclaimed land.

Mirinia Hakaraia carried a handmade sign in the October 16 march saying, "Stop the confiscation bill" in English and Maori. "This foreshore and seabed issue is the final insult," she said in an interview. "They've taken so much before." Hararaia, 44, described herself as part of a "lost generation" who had not learnt the Maori language as children because of efforts by previous governments to suppress it.

"My mother's mouth was washed out in soap," when she spoke Maori at school, she said. Now, at universities, Maori language courses "cost \$600 a paper, to learn what was stolen from us." Along with land, language has been a key question in the Maori national struggle.

At the rally at the march's conclusion, the theme of a number of the speeches was for Maori to focus on voting at the next parliamentary elections, with the Maori Party being promoted in particular. This party was formed when Tariana Turia, a member of the Labour government's Cabinet, resigned in opposition to the foreshore and seabed legislation. She won the resulting by-election as a candidate for the Maori Party.

A similar protest held the same day in Dunedin attracted 100 people.

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Cuba is undergoing an "explosion today in music, the plastic arts, and movies," said Miguel Angel Ramírez, Cuba's ambassador to New Zealand. He was speaking at a public meeting here October 9, entitled, "The Flowering of Cuban Culture." The Cuba Friendship Society sponsored the event.

Based in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, Ramírez was in New Zealand at the invitation of organizers of a festival of Cuban movies held in October.

Among the 50 attending the meeting were Cuban volunteer teachers involved in a literacy program in the North Island town of Te Awamutu.

The ambassador said that the roots of Cuba's artistic strength go back to 1961, two years after the overthrow of the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. That year saw a campaign to eradicate illiteracy, a massive effort that produced "better education and a better and more critical attitude toward art in general," he said.

At the beginning of the meeting, Ramírez presented a slide show produced by the Cuban foreign ministry detailing the impact of the economic war by Washington and other imperialist powers against the Cuban Revolution since 1962.

In the 1990s, Washington extended the embargo's reach with the Torricelli and Helms-Burton acts, which broadened U.S. governmental powers to slap punitive measures on third countries that trade with Cuba.

Citing one example of the impact of these measures, Ramírez said that Cuba is blocked from purchasing planes manufactured both by the U.S. aircraft manufacturer Boeing and its European rival Airbus because of the U.S. components Airbus uses. As a result, Cuba is forced to lease the planes at a substantial added cost.

In response to a question about Cuba's response to recent hurricanes that devastated several Caribbean countries and caused loss of life in the southeastern United States, Ramírez said, "We feel

proud of what was done during hurricanes Charley and Ivan—we evacuated almost 2 million people." Only a handful of people in Cuba were killed by hurricane Charley and none during Ivan.

"These things we do in Cuba you can't do just with money, they require a lot of solidarity," Ramírez said. Cubans had opened up their homes to the evacuees, he added.

One participant expressed concern that Cuba would be "swamped by U.S. culture" if Washington ended the embargo.

In reply, the ambassador noted that some capitalist politicians in the United States oppose the embargo today not because they support the Cuban Revolution, he said, but "because they think they can topple the revolution a different way, by making it go the way of Poland and Czechoslovakia." Cuba does not shrink before such a possibility, he said. "We're

not against people-to-people cultural exchanges," he emphasized. The Cuban government instead promotes such exchanges. "We already watch more than 300 U.S. movies a year. We introduce many cultural influences from abroad into the Cuban melting pot. We are not afraid of foreign influence in Cuba."

In an interview with the Scoop online news service conducted during his visit, Ramírez said that under the embargo, "American companies are not allowed to import Cuban music or Cuban movies. They are not allowed to engage in any cultural exchanges with Cuban artists. They are not allowed to invite any Cuban artists to the United States. They are not even allowed to come to Cuba to see it on their own."

The Scoop reporter added that "Cubans who wish to perform in the U.S. must do so free of charge."

Wellington: 2,000 protest rightist National Front

BY TERRY COGGAN

WELLINGTON, New Zealand—Around 2,000 people marched through central Wellington October 23 to counter a rally being held by the National Front, an ultrarightist political organization.

About 40 National Front members rallied outside parliament, many with shaved heads and sporting Nazi tattoos. They carried placards saying: "Defend the flag. Our heritage is not for sale." The fascist outfit campaigns against "foreign ownership" and for jobs for "New Zealanders," and calls for the repatriation of non-European immigrants.

Tze Ming Mok, a spokesperson for Multicultural Aotearoa (New Zealand), the group that organized the march, said in a press statement, "In the past we've thought the best way of dealing with the National Front was to do nothing, ignore them, and not draw attention to them. But this has left them to present their discredited ideas unchallenged in the media. And doing nothing has not stopped the racist

attacks and disgusting harassment."

The proposal for the march came out of a public meeting called in response to two attacks on Jewish graves and incidents of abuse against Somali immigrants that occurred in Wellington last August. The stated aims of the protest were to stop the National Front, oppose humiliating immigration policies such as pregnancy testing of Pacific Island women, and to stop Maori bashing.

Jase Blair, 19, came to the march from Palmerston North with a group of fellow students. "We have to challenge the National Front," he told the *Militant*. "They are dangerous because of the populist way they present their ideas."

One young couple, who did not want to be named, said they had decided to march after a run-in the previous evening with a group of skinheads who told the woman "to go back to China." The couple carried a sign that read: "Asians are not the problem, your narrow minds are." Other signs included, "Say to the National Front:

No fascism, no sexism, no racism," and "Celebrate diversity."

A number of union banners were evident at the event. Mike Shakespeare, Wellington Branch president of the Seafarers Division of the Maritime Union, said, "It's important for trade unionists to oppose racial discrimination, whether it occurs in the workplace or in society."

Speaking at the end of the march, Tze Ming Mok said the National Front "were a boil on top of a much bigger infection." Pointing to the parliament building, she said, "Some occupants of these buildings issued a license to racism" by using immigrants as "political footballs."

Other speakers reflected New Zealand nationalist themes. Government Race Relations Conciliator Joris De Bres said the march had made him "proud to be a New Zealander."

Scuffles broke out when some of the marchers confronted National Front members as they were being escorted by cops to cars after their rally.